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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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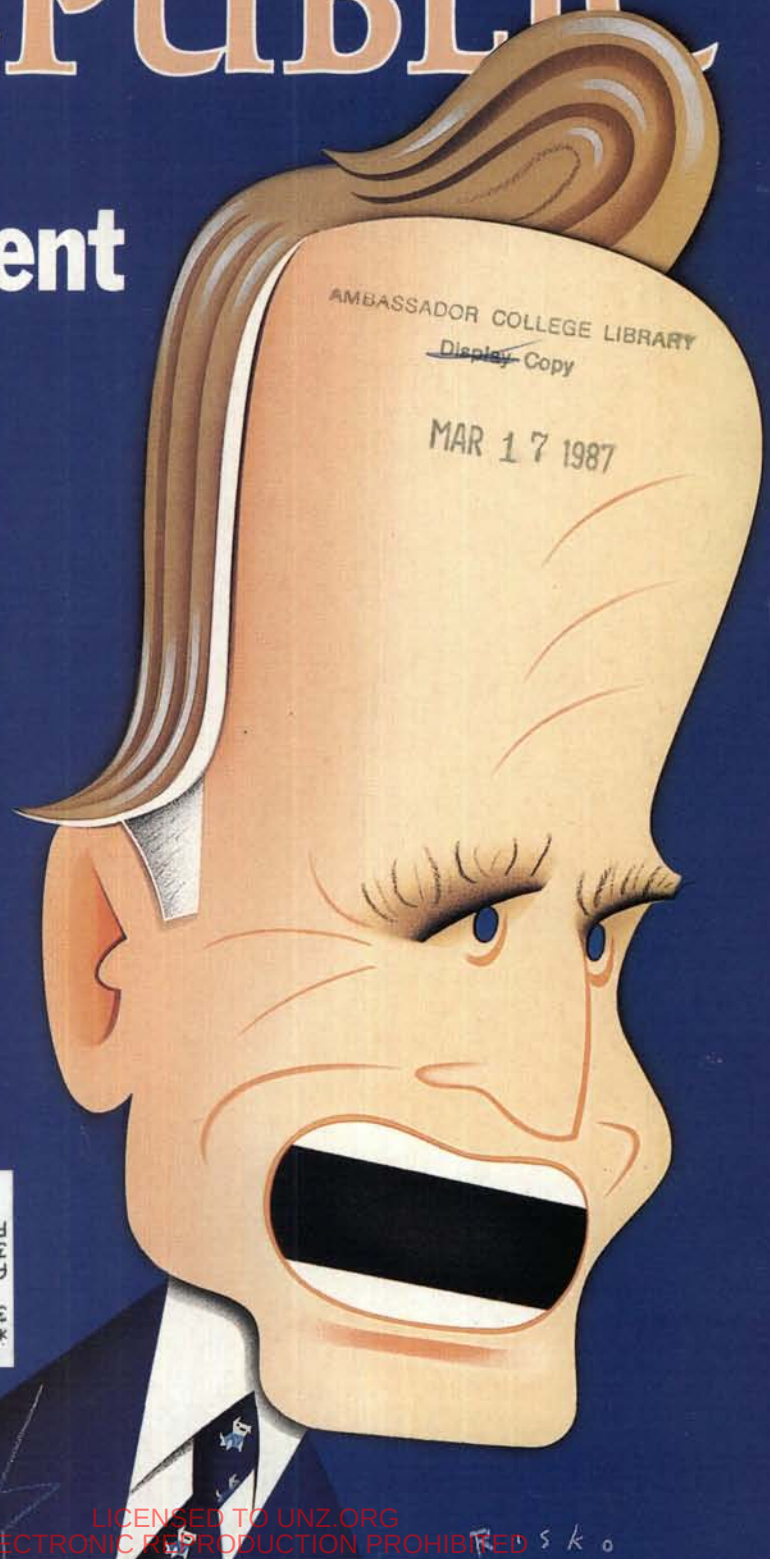

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Toward a more competitive America—V

How to stimulate investment and growth

Over the past few weeks, we've hit pretty hard at the themes that America's current economic problems can't be blamed on our foreign trading partners, because protectionism only invites retaliation. We've argued that productivity is the real key to economic growth. And we've pointed out that by failing to address the basic problem of the huge budget deficit—and by meeting social costs with taxes imposed on the business sector alone—America's leaders have ignored this country's need to remain competitive, and have actually hurt American businesses in the worldwide marketplace.

But that doesn't mean government shouldn't take a proper leadership role. Nor does it mean that America, over time, can't afford to address its agenda of social concerns—clean air, clean water, more jobs, better education, better health care, and a secure, dignified retirement for older citizens.

This agenda, obviously, will take vast amounts of money at a time of huge budget deficits. And the best way it can be met is through the constant creation of new wealth —which means new investment in the plant, equipment, research, and people needed to become increasingly more productive.

How can government stimulate productivity?

- By encouraging the savings that lead to investment. That means more IRAs and 401(k)s, not fewer. That may even mean more favorable treatments for capital gains and dividend and interest income.
- By stressing savings of a different sort. That means eliminating the waste that hasn't yet been wrung out of the federal budget.
- By imposing a consumption tax if further spending cuts prove impossible to make. Such a tax—long used in Europe and about to be imposed in Japan—would make fast, meaningful inroads on the deficit. It wouldn't be levied on exports, and therefore wouldn't raise the costs of American manufacturers and the prices of U.S. goods overseas. But it would be levied on imports sold in the U.S. (in accordance with accepted international trade practices), thereby helping American companies regain some of the ground they have lost here at home. Moreover, such a levy would make taxpayers out of people who currently find ways of avoiding the income tax.
- By doing all it can to encourage American companies to export all they can—and to compete strongly against imports here at home. That means consideration of the foreign trade implications whenever new legislation is passed. That certainly doesn't mean imposing taxes on this industry and that industry willy-nilly to grease whatever wheel happens to be squeaking loudest at any given moment.
- By recognizing the contributions business has made and can continue to make. That means an end to name-calling and scapegoating—on both sides.

American multinational companies can, and do, compete successfully all over the world. While the U.S. trade balance became a shambles, these companies continued to operate successfully in world markets. They did so by producing in those countries with the best business climates.

U.S. multinational manufacturing firms increased their exports from America by more than 600 percent in value and 150 percent in quantity between 1966 and 1983. But they increased their exports from operating sites overseas by about double the American amounts.

So to argue that American businessmen have lost their management and technological skills, or grown fat and lazy, is neither true nor relevant. We should be looking to ourselves to learn why this country has provided a less favorable business environment than some of our trading partners. And then we should act to improve the climate.

America's business sector, and the wealth it produced, was long the envy of the world—and can be again. Through the cooperation of our government leaders and the private sector, this nation can realize strong and sustainable economic growth—and thereby create an economic pie big enough to nourish every segment of the population.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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FROM WASHINGTON

WELCOME TO THE RUSTBELT

"The *New York Times* is not going to run CBS News," Lawrence Tisch told Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek*. Tisch, president of CBS, is said to be irritated that cutbacks at his company have generated so much more publicity and handwringing than the much larger layoffs and restructurings taking place throughout corporate America.

It's not exactly true that the media have ignored the dramas other industries are going through because of foreign competition, takeovers, or (as at CBS) wrenching management changes to avoid a takeover. The trauma of the rustbelt and the anguish of plant closings have become media staples. But it's certainly true that the dismissal of 215 people and a ten percent cut in the $300 million budget of CBS News have gotten a lot more attention.

The reason is no mystery. For journalists covering this story, the victims are people like us, friends and colleagues. There but for the grace of Larry Tisch go I. This is one of the great stories of the 1980s—the restructuring of America's economy—driven home to the opinion-making class. As such, it's an opportunity to think about this important story in a more urgent context.

The argument usually breaks down this way. On the one side are the ruthless rationalizers (represented in this case by Tisch) who say that American industry has gone soft, management has gone slack, and drastic steps are needed to restore our economic pre-eminence. On the other side are voices of the workers and local communities (represented in this case by Dan Rather and Andy Rooney), maintaining that there are values more important than the bottom line. Somewhere on the sidelines, holding seminars and writing magazine articles, are academics and journalists who argue that sentiment can't be allowed to stand in the way of economic progress and efficiency, but that there are better ways to grease the wheels of change.

In the matter of CBS News, it seems hard to deny that the ruthless rationalizers have a pretty good case. Network news budgets have tripled since 1978, far outpacing inflation. Coverage may have gotten better, but has it gotten that much better? ABC News producer Av Westin says in an inflammatory and widely leaked memo (entitled "Days of Penury, Days of Affluence") that in some ways coverage has gotten worse. When too many people are bumping into one another duplicating stories that never get on the air anyway, he argues, it's bad for morale. Furious colleagues accuse Westin of sucking up to ABC's tightfisted new management, but the indictment rings true.

Anyone who has experienced the workings of a traditional network and those of Ted Turner's CNN (broadcasting's equivalent of the South Koreans) has been struck by how gold-plated a place like CBS seems by comparison. At CNN you clip on your own microphone; at NBC a technician does it for you. At CNN there's coffee if you're willing to rinse out a dirty cup; at ABC there's guacamole dip and a variety of beverages. And so on.

Three years ago an MIT professor named Martin Weitzman published a small but influential book called *The Share Economy* (Harvard University Press). Stripped of its complications, Weitzman's essential point was that the economy would function in a much healthier way if workers took a large part of their pay in the form of a profit share rather than fixed wages. Many have argued for profit sharing and even worker ownership as a way to replace confrontation with cooperation between employees and management. Weitzman's point was different. He noted that adjustments for hard times could take the form of lower average pay for everybody rather than unemployment (in effect, a 100 percent pay cut) for an unlucky minority.

A little mathematics shows how Weitzman's method might work at a place like CBS News. The network has laid off 14 out of 90 on-air correspondents. Correspondents make an average

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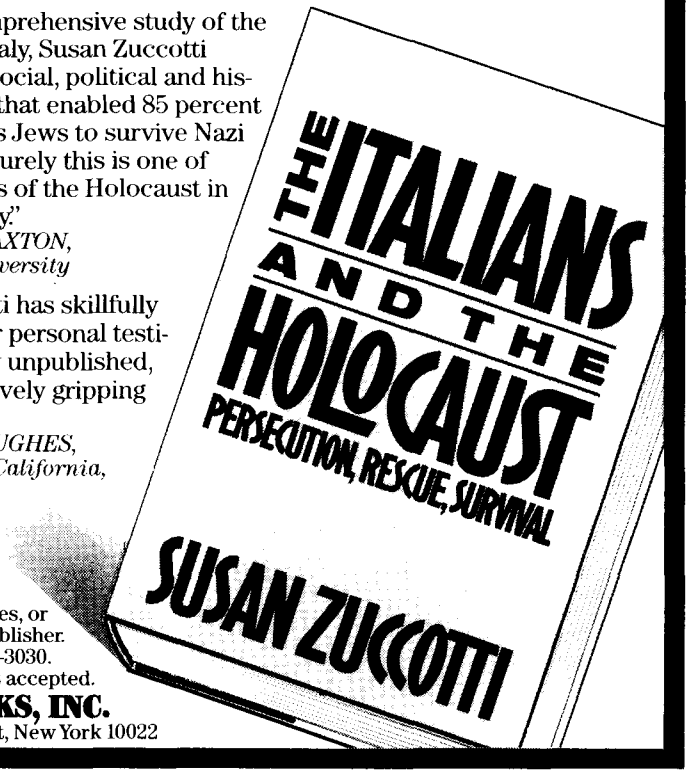

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CORRESPONDENCE

CORY'S DOOMED DEMOCRACY

To the editors:

In "Snapping at the Revolution" (February 16), you're right that Corazon Aquino faces suffocating pressures on the left and on the right, from people with pretty unsavory motives. But your editorial arm-waving about the beauty of democracy has obscured one fact: even without these pressures, Aquino is headed for failure, because she is a member of the aristocracy, and a Catholic.

As an aristocrat, she will not betray her family and core supporters by implementing a comprehensive land reform. Redistributing land never was a big plank in her platform, and her recent proposals are too little, too late. Millions of Filipinos will remain mired in near-feudal poverty. As a Catholic, Aquino will never betray her religious principles, or her friends among the clergy, by implementing a nationwide birth control program. Without it, the population will continue to grow faster than the economy. In 1986 a slim 0.17 percent GNP growth rate still meant a 2.26 percent GNP decline per capita.

Your editorial condemns the idea that economic equality must precede political equality as "one of the most cynical and lethal convictions of the Marxist mind." The blast of rhetoric drowns out an important fact: no middle class, no democracy. Aquino's failure to carry out land reform and population control will swell the ranks of the poorest. Democracy does not take root in such an environment.

CARROLL R. BOGERT
Hong Kong

FIGHTING WORDS

To the editors:

In focusing on the connection between guns and shootings, William Saletan missed the point that the problem of gun abuse is cultural ("Sons of Guns," March 2). Japan is a free country that has gun control, not to deprive people of their rights, but because as a society it refuses to tolerate violence. The citizens forsake their right to own guns in return for safety. And when someone does manage to get a gun and commit a crime, the society penalizes him harshly. As a result, they have about 15 handgun deaths a year. America has thousands. Until Americans see that our gun laws are no longer a national institution but a national albatross, little progress will be made.

THOMAS BLACKWOOD
Scottsdale, Arizona

To the editors:

In "Sons of Guns," the comment "Why did Vitek and Roberts shoot their parents? Because they had guns" brought me back in time to when I was just a child and my father (who gave me several guns and hunted with me; but I never shot him) sometimes recited an old French ballad that went: *Monsieur De La Palisse est mort / est mort perdant la vie / un quart d'heure avant sa mort / il était encore en vie . . .* (Mister De La Palisse is dead / he died losing his life / a quarter of an hour before dying / he was still alive . . .). Very well: apply that kind of simplistic approach and all the world's problems will disappear by magic. But remember that simplistic solutions never work, and cannot be the guide of the American people.

G. BONOMI
Houston, Texas

HOSTAGE TO TERRORISM

To the editors:

Ronald Steel's "Hostage to Innocence" (TRB, February 23), criticizing Americans' reactions to hostage-taking, reminded me of a science fiction story about a "zone of non-causality," where objects were not what they appeared to be, and consequences of the simplest actions unpredictable. Hostage-taking begins to make this fiction seem real. We yearn for old-style confrontation—a building surrounded by cops and SWAT teams—but we get denunciations and denials. We rarely know if any negotiating is going on, who is doing it, or where. Our government makes a move that turns into a crisis because maybe that move was not what it appeared to be.

Mr. Steel says we don't feel we should be held accountable for our impetuosity in global matters, suggesting that we're pouting about having citizens kidnapped. We are wrestling with a much stronger emotion than a mere pout. Because terrorism continues without the perpetrators being confronted, much less

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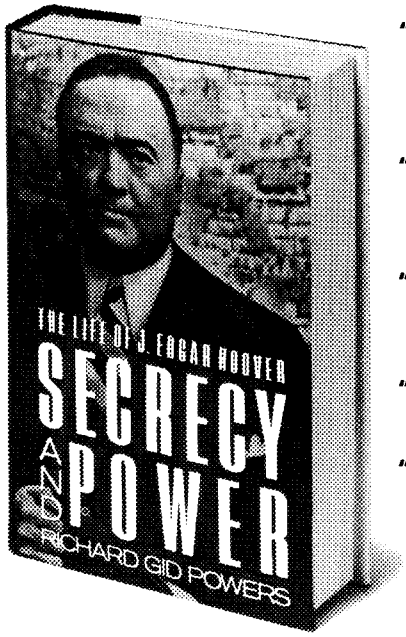
CLASSIFIED INFORMATION, *UNTIL NOW...* THE LIFE OF J. EDGAR HOOVER.



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THE NEW REPUBLIC
MARCH 30, 1987

IMMIGRATION REFORM II

There's been a sudden shift in perceptions about illegal immigration. Once preoccupied with borders so porous that everything from drugs to communism could seep across, Americans are now feeling a twinge of shame at the spectacle of Central American "bus people" fleeing to Canada to escape the consequences of this country's tough new immigration law.

This was predictable. Americans always have been ambivalent about immigration. The central tension is between current residents' fear for the integrity of American "national identity" and their own awareness that every generation in American history has been made up of the descendants of immigrants and new immigrants. Though Americans enjoy the benefits of immigrants' economic energy and low wages, they wince at the exploitation of illegal aliens. Small wonder that, while once we were outraged at the brazen flouting of our immigration laws, now we can't quite stomach the nasty consequences of enforcing them.

How should a nation of immigrants manage immigration? So far, our immigration laws have struck a poor balance. Even though the outright racism of turn-of-the-century laws has been erased, the law is still riddled with inconsistencies and arbitrary distinctions. Since 1965 there has been a strict limit of 270,000 new immigrants each year. But Congress has created numerous "unrestricted" exceptions for family members, political refugees, and U.S. government employees. As a result, the total number of legal immigrants in 1986 was 601,708, and an equal number probably entered the country illegally.

The 270,000 "restricted" visas go to candidates who fit into one of six "preference categories," which are based on family ties and professional expertise. A limit of 20,000 per country further complicates the picture. Mexico gets only 20,000, even though it supplies at least ten times that number of new American residents every year. The categories themselves are based on questionable moral and economic distinctions. Is the nephew of a citizen more worthy of admission than a childhood friend? Do we have a greater need for Indian orthopedists than Chilean arc welders? The Supreme Court's recent decision making it easier to obtain political asylum here gave legal expression to a generous sentiment many Americans feel. But it only heightens the contradictions of our overall immigration policy. Any attempt to gauge the moral claim of a censored Polish filmmaker against that of a starving Haitian peasant is inevitably arbitrary.

For relatives of U.S. citizens, who get 80 percent of all immigrant visas issued, the system works fine. But it has become nearly impossible for those without connections to enter the country legally. There is no room for people who simply want to do what our ancestors did: come to America and try their luck. No wonder so many such "opportunity migrants"—from Mexico, Yugoslavia, India, China, and elsewhere—choose to break the law.

The apotheosis of immigration arbitrariness was the Irish sweepstakes, an addendum to the recent reform legislation that was the brainchild of Boston Congressman Brian J. Donnelly, who felt that his fellow Celts had been slighted by the law. Since the State Department hasn't issued a "non-preference" visa since 1978, the unskilled, unconnected Irishman has no chance of following his forefathers. Eventually the sweepstakes for 10,000 coveted visas was opened to contestants from 36 nations that also claimed to have been "adversely affected." On January 21 hundreds of thousands of entries began arriving at a Washington post office box, from which the State Department will select the lucky winners.

Though the new immigration law was designed to stop illegal immigration, it did nothing about the inconsistencies in legal immigration. Unless there is a reasonable chance for average people to immigrate through legal channels, all attempts at reform will be in vain.

If anything, the law has gotten *more* arbitrary under immigration reform. Although TNR doesn't oppose the amnesty provision, it will mean that those who entered illegally are rewarded with green cards and eventual citizenship, while those who waited patiently in the visa line at the U.S. Embassy in Manila are still waiting. Illegals who work in factories or restaurants must have resided in the United States continuously since 1982 to qualify for amnesty under the new law. But for agricultural workers, the minimum qualification is only three months of residence

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during the last year. This sop to agribusiness interests has created a sudden surge in the number of aliens who want to pick grapes. Although the law only prohibits *hiring* new illegal aliens, many jittery employers have fired every worker without documents. And even those aliens who have been in the country since January 1982 and qualify for amnesty won't get work permits until their applications are processed in May. Hence the stampede into Ontario.

As long as immigration is restricted, employer sanctions are a necessary evil. Under the old law, it was only illegal for an illegal alien to take a job—not for an employer to hire him. If we are going to have limits, and enforce them, we must do so without such gross hypocrisy, and without creating such a gross opportunity for exploitation of the powerless by the powerful.

The arguments against immigration are as old as they are spurious, contradicting both economic evidence and the historical success of the United States. Indeed, for all the scare talk about Third World immigration, the rate of annual immigration, legal and illegal, amounts to only 0.3 percent of the total population—half the historic average of 0.6 percent.

Any attempt to limit immigration involves painful, often arbitrary choices. The best way to blunt these sharp choices is to increase radically the numbers of newcomers we admit. First, both the country limits and the intricate system of preferences should be removed from the system. But most important, the overall ceiling of immigrant visas should be increased from 270,000 to one million per year. Only in this way can America restore the integrity of its laws and its standing as the favored destination of those seeking both political freedom and economic opportunity. □

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	**IT'S ALIVE!**	2	19

Iranamok. Reagan's speech has gotten great press, though there's a distinct echo of the "See, he's not senile" line that followed the State of the Union. Fact is, politically, this is as far off the deck as he can get (again). Everyone to Reagan's left is now awake, and he has single-handedly revived stand-up political humor. That's a post-Iranamok dynamic that can't be undone.

2. THE WOMEN OF IRANAMOK 8 2

Nancy, Maureen, et al. Fawn's gone, though Maureen is weighing in with reports of presidential ire. Hold the presses, though: attacks on Nancy have been tainted with misogyny, it seems, and she's gained defenders. Just as the original anti-Nancy angle played against Reagan, so the backlash helps him, discrediting at least one critical line of attack.

3. FEAR STRIKES OUT 4 11

AIDS. Sexual fear has now become so ingrained that pre-AIDS sexual behavior in movies and on TV "looks" inappropriate. The occasional film reviewer has remarked on this, but the big news is that TV's "Cagney & Lacey" is changing its once freewheeling scripts to reflect these changes in viewer reactions.

4. ONE FOR THE BOOKS * 3

Secular humanism. What a mistake professional skeptics made when they named themselves secular humanists. The Alabama decision banning a whole shelf of textbooks on the grounds that they promote secular humanist religion is a permanent cultural wedge between the fundamentalist subculture and the rest of us. Even if reversed on appeal, this decision will never really go away.

5. GRATE SOCIETY * 8

Compassion. The homeless question has achieved a kind of media apotheosis. It is now worth at least a few celebrities' time to sleep out in the cold in solidarity with homeless persons. In fact, it would have been worth it to more of them. The story got heavy coverage all over, from newsweeklies to Soviet TV.

6. INCREDIBLE SHRINKING NEWS — 1

TV. Firings at CBS and the writers strike are only the tip of network TV's problems. While nobody was looking, something called the "two-and-a-half network audience" happened. At any given time, there are not enough viewers to pay the bills of the lowest rated show. The industry does not expect all three networks to survive, and each of them is scampering to avoid eventual elimination.

7. HITTING THE CEILING — 1

Michelangelo. Never mind the "David" torso, the Sistine Chapel ceiling is getting too colorful. The Chapel is famous for being famous, another art celebrity. Experts may argue over its colors, but the important color here is Technicolor. The Stone best seller and the Heston movie have given the ceiling popular emotional content. A similar debate over da Vinci's "Last Supper" stayed in the specialty magazines. No movie.

8. SEA CHANGES — 1

The ferry disaster. Whether it's terrorist bombings, natural disasters, or tragedies such as last week's ferry capsizing, the U.S. media reaction has little do with the death toll. The depth of coverage is in proportion to the number of victims the press views as cultural brethren. Compare the close-up coverage of the British ferry to the ho-hum response of major U.S. media to earthquakes in Ecuador that apparently killed hundreds. It took days for a wire service wrap-up of that story to make the *New York Times.*

9. BACK TO THE FUTURE — 1

Computers. So the second generation of the personal computer is here, is it? What happened to the first one? Offices, yes, are revolutionized, and that's where the faster computers are headed. But the computerized lifestyle never materialized. The pc-VCR-CD contrast is instructive: successful new technology allows you to do what you were already doing. The future looks (and sounds) deceptively like the present.

10. UFORIA * 3

Curiosa. A year ago, no subject was more dead than UFOs. Now reputable publishers are standing in line to bring out abduction stories more farfetched than ever. What accounts for them, or for interest in the new "channelers" from Atlantis? The answer lies not in our stars, but in our politics. The more instability, the more irrationality to exploit.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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ISRAELAMOK

"Don't worry America, Israel is on your side." For a few years this has been a popular maxim on Israeli T-shirts. And for a few years, too, it has been a popular maxim for Israel's policy-makers. It perfectly expresses the mixture of arrogance and foolishness, the cocky loss of perspective, that characterizes the present stage in Israel's relations with the United States. Iranamok and the Pollard affair are only the most outrageous instances of a policy that might be called Israelamok.

The sale of weapons to Iran represented a betrayal of every value and every act of the West's decades-long campaign against terrorism. During those decades, Israel was the inspiration for that campaign. It had suffered most from terrorism, and it had responded most firmly against it. Its role in Iranamok has robbed it of that moral and operational authority. Not only did Israel traffic in arms with the most repugnant regime in its region (and the one most bloodcurdling in its anti-Zionist rhetoric). It also coaxed the United States to stay involved in this disgraceful activity (meanwhile using all its considerable muscle to prevent the sale of American weapons to a place like Jordan). The Tower Commission report shows Israelis reviving American interest each time it flagged.

Having assisted the Reagan administration in its most ignominious hour, the Israelis think that they have nothing to apologize for. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who presided over the intrigue as prime minister, is unrepentant. Worse, when Yitzhak Shamir, the present prime minister, visited Washington a few weeks ago, he told reporters that he came to tell President Reagan not to succumb to what he called "Iran guilt." Shamir could do worse than to succumb himself. The guilt is real, and he shares it.

Then there is the disgraceful Pollard affair—disgraceful in itself, and disgraceful in the aftermath of its exposure. To be sure, some of the outrage about Israeli espionage against the United States is disingenuous; states spy on states, allies on allies. But the Pollard affair is a little out of the ordinary. For a start, it appears that the magnitude of Pollard's activity, the sheer volume of the secrets he stole, was staggering. Second, Pollard's testimony leaves the impression that his Israeli handlers preyed upon precisely the sort of passion for Israel, precisely the sort of Jewish pride, that American Jews insist—correctly—does not interfere with their loyalty to the United States. Writing in the *Jerusalem Post*, Shlomo Avineri preposterously and a little perniciously suggested that those American Jews who are angry about the Pollard affair "have to be emancipated." "Look how deeply you find yourself in 'galut,' " or in exile. This is just a loftier version of the Israeli condescension that is responsible for Israel's many recent mistakes. All this is not only an insult to Israel's most important ally, but an astonishing blow to its most valuable and loyal foreign friends.

In its words and its deeds throughout the investigation and the conviction of Pollard, the Israeli government has expressed nothing but contempt for the goodwill of the United States. The air force hero who handled Pollard (and who was indicted by an American court) was not reprimanded, but promoted. The spook who ran the entire operation was catapulted by the calamity to the presidency of Israel Chemical Industries. In Washington Prime Minister Shamir insisted that the Pollard affair was "not important," even as the evidence of his senses told him that for all of his American hosts in all the departments of American government it is extremely important. It used to seem that this kind of wantonness was the special gift of Ariel Sharon. Now the entire Israeli government, Labor and Likud, seems to have caught it.

The United States is no mere ally of Israel. America is Israel's protector, its patron, the power without which Israel would have no security and no economy. Naturally Israelis sometimes resent their own dependence. But this dependence is a fact of their life, in some ways the most significant fact. The behavior of Israel toward the United States has been morally unworthy and politically stupid. Israel's foreign policy of resentment breeds only American resentment. If the smart-asses in the corridors of Israeli power think, as one commentator recently put it, that Israel is "a Teflon nation," they may be in for a shock.

NOTEBOOK

□ THIS BUD'S FOR YOU: Many years ago Zero Mostel starred in a play called *The Latent Heterosexual* by Paddy Chayevsky, about a man whose business affairs came to dominate his personal life so completely that he got married and ultimately committed suicide on the advice of his lawyer. The attempted suicide of former national security adviser Robert McFarlane last month was obviously a personal tragedy, not a calculated act. As essayist Roger Rosenblatt noted on the "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour" a few days later, events like this are a reminder that there is a real, vulnerable person behind the public face of even the most public of figures. What are we to make, though, of the carefully orchestrated campaign by McFarlane and his lawyer, Leonard Garment, to market McFarlane's suicide attempt for public consumption? McFarlane has had a heavy media schedule for months, giving his side of Iranamok. Within days of his release from the hospital, he was back at it, granting interviews to Barbara Walters of ABC and Maureen Dowd of the *New York Times*, posing for photographers in a jog with his daughter, and explaining that he'd tried to kill himself out of fear that he'd failed his country. True or not, this is surely a new low in the cynical Washington art of "spin control." Perhaps McFarlane's own psyche is too fragile to make the distinction between the public and the private man. But why on earth don't his advisers and his loved ones shut him up?

□ SUFFER THE LITTLE CONGRESSMEN: An annual tradition has begun in Washington: a winter carnival that gives

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celebrities and politicians a chance to savor fleetingly the misery of the homeless. Last January it was an extravagant catered dinner party in the basement of Mitch Snyder's dank Second Street shelter. The docudrama of Snyder's life, starring Martin Sheen, was to be filmed the following day. Last week it was a slumber party on two heat grates by the Capitol, jointly organized by Sheen and Snyder and attended by Mayor Marion Barry, Representatives Tony Coelho, Mickey Leland, Joe Kennedy and his wife, and other actors and politicians. The mayor and the congressmen came equipped with bodyguards, and Barry's chauffeured car stood poised for takeoff in the morning. The purported aim of the "Grate American Sleep-Out," as it was billed, was to revive flagging public indignation about the plight of the homeless, and to elicit support for the House bill calling for $725 million in emergency aid. But naturally the stars, not the street people, were the center of attention. Those who normally sleep on the Capitol grates went off to find quieter accommodations for the night. The homelessness crisis has remained stubbornly resistant to quick policy fixes, but it has proved advantageous to politicians with a fondness for theatrics. Coelho, whose parents lost their dairy farm in 1963, said: "I know what it's like to be thrown out. When my family went bankrupt, we moved into a shack." The next morning, snug in his office, he complained about his wet sleeping bag and the noisy street. And, like most slumber party-goers, he boasted about how little sleep he'd gotten.

□ DON'T BANK ON IT:

Officers of Defunct Ohio S&L Are Acquitted on Most Counts

—*Washington Post*, March 3

3 Convicted In Failure of Home State

—*New York Times*, same day

□ SEASON'S READINGS: Though we don't review books by our own editors, we note with pleasure forthcoming books by three contributing editors: Robert B. Reich's *Tales of a New America* (Times Books); Maggie Scarf's *Intimate Partners: Patterns in Love and Marriage* (Random House); and Michael Walzer's *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Harvard University Press). *The Orchestra: Origins and Transformations* (Scribner's), edited by Joan Peyser, contains a chapter by TNR music columnist Edward Rothstein on "The New Amateur Player and Listener," a version of which appears in the current issue. Eugene McCarthy, a frequent contributor to TNR, has written a memoir of his life in politics, *Up 'Til Now* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich); and Michael Kazin, another contributor, has recently published *Barons of Labor* (University of Illinois Press), a study of unions in the progressive era.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

BAKER'S HALF-DOZEN

TWENTY CONSERVATIVE Republican senators gathered with President Reagan and Howard Baker, the new White House chief of staff, around a mahogany table in the Cabinet Room on March 5. The senators were tickled just to be there, having been turned down time and again by Donald Regan, Baker's predecessor, in earlier requests for a session with the president. Jesse Helms, the most conservative of the bunch, leaped at the chance to give Reagan a detailed rundown of the senator's own ideological priorities. Near the top was retention of Gary Bauer, who had been White House adviser on domestic policy for exactly one month. "Mr. President," Helms said, "you've got a good man here in Gary Bauer. He knows the Reagan agenda, and you ought to be relying on him." Helms didn't pause for a Reagan response, moving hastily to other items. But the president did nod approvingly at the Bauer recommendation.

Helms and Reagan were three days behind the curve. In Baker's first day at the White House, he summoned Bauer to the chief of staff's corner office and said, please stay. Bauer was pleasantly surprised, as you might expect in the case of a late Regan hire. Over the weekend—after the announcement of Baker's selection on Friday, February 27, but before his arrival on Monday, March 2—Bauer's anxiety level had risen. On Saturday he ran into James Cannon, a long-time Baker aide, in the stairway of the West Wing. "I hear you're in my office," Cannon said. Bauer was taken aback, then relieved when Cannon said he was referring to the second-floor office he had used as domestic policy chief under President Gerald Ford. Still, Bauer wasn't sure about his job until Baker called him in.

He should have been. Baker needs him as almost much as he needs Baker. In his initial days at the White House, Baker took on three broad tasks, and assuaging conservatives was one of them. (He had narrow tasks too, such as picking FBI director William Webster as the new CIA chief.) If conservatives were to gang up on Baker, his effectiveness would be hampered, his life made miserable. Keeping Bauer, well known to conservatives, was an obvious step. Regan, after all, had brought Bauer from the Education Department, where he had been undersecretary, for exactly the same reason. Patrick Buchanan was leaving as communications director, and Regan wanted another identifiable right-winger on the staff, if only to keep the conservatives happy.

For Baker, conservatives have always been a problem. "He has been a backboard against which conservatives have played," says Mitch Daniels, the departing White House political director. "Some conservatives came to see him as the embodiment of Washington compromise politics." Within hours of taking the job, Baker moved to combat this view. That Friday Attorney General Edwin Meese III dropped by his Washington law office for a chat.

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Meese offered his aide, Kenneth Cribb, as a member of the new chief of staff's transition team, working with Baker associates Tom Griscom and Cannon. Baker accepted. This made practical sense because Cribb had worked for Meese at the White House during Reagan's first term. More important, it made political sense because Cribb is a movement conservative.

There was nothing subtle about Baker's campaign. His conservative supporters, including Meese and former Senator Paul Laxalt (who had recommended Baker to the president in the first place), mounted a telephone barrage to persuade other right-wingers to lay off Baker for now. Allan Ryskind, the editor of the conservative weekly *Human Events*, was peppered with calls. Bauer phoned the leaders of conservative organizations in Washington. It worked. Ryskind wrote a piece saying the jury is out on Baker. Conservative leaders said little. A few were positive. After lunch with Baker on March 5, Ed Feulner, the president of the Heritage Foundation, said he takes Baker at his word. "He says he wants to implement the Reagan agenda," said Feulner. "I'm willing to give him the benefit of the doubt."

A tougher job for Baker was propping up Reagan. The Tower Commission, which characterized the president as being at the mercy of aides, and Regan's ouster concentrated press attention on the chief of staff. This impedes Reagan's political recovery. "Any attention, positive or negative, to the staff here disserves the basic goal of restoring the president to the primary role," says Daniels. You can't present the image of a take-charge president if the chief of staff is visibly in command. In Reagan's first term, James Baker was powerful without being highly visible. He managed this by giving few on-the-record interviews [he normally talked to reporters on a not-for-attribution basis] and declining most invitations to appear on TV interview shows. Regan lacked Baker's discipline and spurned advice that he stay off the tube.

Howard Baker intends to emulate Jim Baker. "He doesn't want a profile that conflicts with the president's, the way Regan's did," says Marlin Fitzwater, the White House spokesman. "He can be on any show he wants to right now," says Daniels. But following his first week at the White House, he turned down all requests for television appearances. Still, TV crews cornered Baker when he walked along the colonnade between the White House residence and West Wing on March 6 after sending off Reagan to Camp David by helicopter. He answered a few questions, mostly about arms control, and finally worked his way free. Back in his office, he told Fitzwater, "I don't want to do that again."

Staying off TV wasn't enough. The removal of John Koehler after one week as communications director played up the fact that Baker, not Reagan, is firmly in command of day-to-day operations at the White House. Koehler is the former Associated Press official (and Nazi youth) who had been exchanging letters with Reagan for years. He worked as a consultant under Charles Wick at the U.S. Information Agency, and was recommended by Wick as Buchanan's replacement. Reagan was enthusiastic, and he told some of

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his outside political advisers what a great choice Koehler was for the job. Regan wasn't as enthusiastic, and neither was Baker. As it turned out, Baker and Koehler began work the same day, March 2. To make sure he'd have a well-situated office, Koehler moved in the day before, taking over Buchanan's old windowless room.

Troubled ensued. A Baker aide came to Koehler on March 2 and asked if he'd take another office. Cannon needed that one so he could work on the transition and be near Baker. Koehler refused. Asked again, he refused again. He joined Reagan and others at a Monday issues lunch and talked up such proposals as a presidential press conference by satellite TV hookup. On March 6 he sat next to Bauer in the Executive Office Building auditorium as Reagan, Baker, and national security adviser Frank Carlucci addressed the staff. Koehler bubbled excitedly with his plans as communications chief. At 3:45 p.m. that day, he was called into Baker's office and given the word: you're out of here. Koehler told reporters on March 9 that he quit because "Baker must have people around him, for the next 22 months, that he's known for a long time, that he understands, people that he's comfortable with and people that are comfortable with him." But what about Reagan? Didn't he want Koehler? Shouldn't Baker be accommodating himself to Reagan's wishes, rather than the other way around? Koehler couldn't answer this. Baker didn't try.

The third task for Baker was configuring the White House staff. He left this up to Griscom, Cannon, and Cribb, and they hoped to have a proposal by mid-March. Their inclination was to create something similar to the staff structure in Reagan's first term. Griscom calls it the "strategic planning concept." The legislative strategy group is its political epicenter. It was run by the deputy chief of staff Richard Darman in the first term, and perhaps will be run by Griscom under Howard Baker. Griscom was Baker's spokesman in the Senate, one of the ablest press secretaries in recent memory on Capitol Hill. He is regarded as politically shrewd and non-ideological. Griscom insists that he is not trying to carve a job out for himself, and he's not. He had just started a lucrative job as president and chief operating officer of a public relations firm in Washington, and his wife is eager for him to return to it after the transition. Don't count on it. He's a Baker loyalist, and Baker needs him on the team.

Even before Baker arrived, the president had spotted his own role model, the basketball coach played by Gene Hackman in the movie *Hoosiers*. The coach makes a heartwarming comeback at a small-town Indiana high school. Of course, the coach doesn't do it alone. His team becomes unstoppable when a new player joins. Reagan saw the movie at Camp David in January and loved it. Knowing this, Daniels, who is from Indiana but didn't like the movie much, brought Hackman to the Oval Office to meet Reagan on February 6, the president's birthday. Hackman was tongue-tied. Reagan told him, "You had a good team there." That was in the movie. With Baker, the president hopes he has one in real life.

FRED BARNES

Gorbachev's gambit.

CAPTAIN ZERO OPTION

THE SOVIETS have tried every position there is to be tried on intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe. First they vociferously opposed NATO's 1979 decision to deploy American Pershing and cruise missiles to counteract Soviet SS-20s targeted on Western Europe. The Soviet campaign—aimed at fanning the European peace movement and letting it exercise unilateral arms control on the Western side—reached its climax with the Soviet withdrawal from the Geneva arms talks in 1983. That tactic failed. NATO governments prevailed over their anti-nuclear movements. The Soviets reconsidered and returned to the table in 1985. But the zigzag continued. At first Gorbachev linked INF to an overall nuclear agreement that would kill President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. Then, at the 1985 Geneva summit, Gorbachev delinked INF from SDI. The way to a settlement seemed sure. Reykjavik was expected to be an INF summit.

There is debate about whether the wreck at Reykjavik was the result of a Soviet trap or simply the kind of accident one should expect from an ill-prepared summit. Whatever the case, Gorbachev decided after Reykjavik to relink INF. He knows that Europe is hungry for some kind of U.S.-Soviet arms control agreement. By holding all arms control hostage to SDI, he was evidently hoping to induce the Europeans to add to existing domestic American pressure to stop SDI. It did not work. In fact, the opposite may have happened. Many Europeans, growing skeptical about the wisdom of a radical INF deal, were quietly pleased to be able to shift onto Reagan and SDI the blame for the INF deadlock.

So last week Gorbachev delinked again. He offered NATO a straight zero option: all European INF forces are to be destroyed. Each side may retain 100 warheads elsewhere: theirs in the Eastern Soviet Union, ours in the United States.

This is an offer the West cannot refuse because it happens to be what the West offered the Soviets six years ago. At the time, however, it was a much better deal from NATO's point of view, because NATO had no intermediate-range missiles and the Soviets had already deployed hundreds of warheads. Nor was it clear at the time whether Western publics would permit any American deployment at all. Now that the battle for deployment has been won, the U.S. offer, which was intended to demonstrate American commitment to arms control, has come back to haunt.

Why the Gorbachev about-face? It may have something to do with the nadir of the Reagan presidency, which predisposes Reagan to grab at any Soviet offer in order to draw attention away from the Iran scandal. Equally important, though hardly ever mentioned, may be the fact that the Gorbachev offer came two days after the Soviets resumed nuclear testing. Now that testing is no longer available as a propaganda weapon, the INF offer will do just as well. Most important, though, is the simple fact that the

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zero option is a good deal for the Soviets. It means undoing the most significant NATO achievement of this decade.

IS IT A good deal for the West? First, the caveats:

1. *Asia*. Last year, when the United States was looking for a compromise on INF, it thought of proposing zero for both sides in Europe and a 50 percent cut in Soviet SS-20s in Asia, restricted to a Soviet "reservation" at some point between Europe and Asia. The idea was floated to the Japanese. They were very upset. Since Japan relies on the American nuclear umbrella even more than Western Europe does, it was terrified by the notion that in order to solve Europe's INF problem Japan would be left alone to face an unopposed force of American-sanctioned Soviet SS-20s. The official American offer was thus adjusted to allow each side to keep a hundred warheads in Europe and a hundred elsewhere (based in the Eastern Soviet Union and in the United States). This is not Gorbachev's current offer. He wants the original zero option, meaning zero, not 100, in Europe.

2. *Verification*. A total zero option is fairly easy to verify, since it means dismantling the infrastructure for making intermediate-range missiles. If 100 warheads are permitted (in Asia and the United States), any agreement would require very intrusive on-site inspection of manufacturing and assembly plants and monitoring of areas where SS-20s are not supposed to be deployed. The American draft INF treaty submitted four days after Gorbachev's delinkage announcement will severely test Soviet openness to intrusive verification.

3. *Short-Range Missiles*. These are missiles with a range under 1,000 kilometers. Gorbachev is hinting that he will pull back short-range missiles that were advanced to forward positions in Czechoslovakia and East Germany to counter NATO deployment of Pershing IIs in 1984 and since. (As with linkage, Gorbachev giveth and he taketh away.) This is a welcome step, but not enough. It would still leave a considerable imbalance of about 9-to-1 in short-range systems in Europe. The Soviets had called for a freeze on these missiles, which would leave them not only with a conventional preponderance on the continent but with a preponderance in short-range nuclear systems as well.

These are problems, but all relatively soluble. The short-range missile question requires that any INF treaty include paring down the Soviet systems to a tolerable level and allowing the West the option of matching Soviet numbers. The verification and Asia problems could swiftly be addressed with a true zero option (meaning zero in Asia as well). If this is impossible, the Soviets will have to accept the severest verification regime ever imposed on them. And the Japanese may have to be content with a mostly symbolic provision allowing American deployment of the 100 "home-based" warheads in Alaska.

The real question about the zero option, however, is not the details. It is whether we want one in the first place. The issue is not primarily a military one. The zero option is, in fact, a Pentagon idea. Originally it was strongly opposed by the State Department. (In his memoirs, Alexander Haig called the 1981 zero option "a frivolous propaganda exercise.") Militarily it makes sense. If the American Pershing IIs and ground-launched cruise missiles are meant to neutralize the military threat posed by Soviet SS-20s, nothing will do that with quite the finality of the zero option. The zero option is deterrence by abolition.

The problem with the zero option is political. The purpose of the Pershing and cruise missiles was not just to correct the military imbalance in Europe, but to "couple" U.S. defense to that of Europe. How? The United States is committed to retaliate, with nuclear weapons if necessary, against even a conventional Soviet attack on Europe. American Euromissiles that can strike at the European part of the Soviet Union are a significant threat to the Soviets. It is difficult to believe that, in the face of an attack on Europe, the United States would launch strategic missiles from its homeland at the Soviets. It is more plausible (though not wholly believable—but nothing can cure that) that nuclear weapons in the theater of conflict would be used. The more credible a threat, the greater its deterrent value. Europeans are aware of this delicate credibility problem, and have worried continuously about America decoupling its nuclear deterrent from Europe. Hence the hesitancy of European leaders to endorse warmly the zero option.

Henry Kissinger offers a cure for the decoupling problem. He has proposed that INF be cut 50 percent. The latest U.S. proposal going into Reykjavik had been a cut to 100 warheads for each side in Europe, a drastic reduction but leaving in place a token "coupler." Either solution would be better for Western purposes than the zero option. It would vastly reduce the level of nuclear destructiveness on the continent, while at the same time maintaining the crucial psychological link between American nuclear weaponry and European security. It is probably worth offering such a non-zero option to the Soviets in Geneva. It is unlikely that Gorbachev will accept. And if he does not, we shall have to accept zero.

WHAT ABOUT decoupling? There are several answers. First, it is quite within Europe's power to live uncoupled. A European commitment to its own conventional defense could deter the Soviets at a pre-nuclear level. That may not happen, but the United States cannot be expected to compensate forever and at every level for Europe's lack of resolve to tend to its own security. Second, INF is not as essential a coupler as now imagined. For almost two decades after 1963 Europe faced an unopposed Soviet intermediate-range force of SS-4s and SS-5s and NATO survived quite well.

But the most important political consideration is this: the greater threat to European security comes not from the existing military imbalance in Europe, nor from the minor decoupling entailed by removing the Pershings. It comes from the recurrent cycles of nuclear pacifism that sweep through Europe and that would leave it essentially disarmed. And nothing would stir Europacifism to life again as much as the United States reneging on its own disarmament proposal, a proposal that in the early 1980s success-

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fully defused that same movement. Gorbachev has the high ground. We gave it to him. The zero option is an American idea. And although it exposes the West to some dangers, the danger of destroying American bona fides on arms control is worse. It would be the ultimate uncoupler.

There undoubtedly will be an INF agreement, and on balance it is probably worth having. But there are lessons for the future. One is that radical arms control proposals ought not be offered unless we are absolutely sure that we would want them to be accepted. If, for example, the zero option in Europe is coupled to the abolition of all ballistic missiles—Reagan proposed that at Reykjavik—we would face an enormous strategic and alliance crisis. It is an offer we were lucky was refused. It should be disavowed now before Gorbachev zigs again and offers us tomorrow our proposals of yesterday.

The second lesson is some skepticism about the value of quantitative arms control. In the end, cutting down the number of nuclear weapons cannot solve the central nuclear problem. If we cut beyond what is needed for minimal deterrence, then we have fatally weakened our security. And if we cut to a level where each side keeps a minimal deterrent, we have in no way abolished the prospect of Armageddon. Arms control is useful to prevent the economic waste of an arms race, for making predictable and thus safer the inevitable process of mutual modernization, and for making each side more confident that the other will respect its security. But it is not much more than that. The idea that it is keeps leading us down byways that are illusionary and dangerous.

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

The ultimate zero option.

YALTA II

THE DEBATE about U.S. foreign and military policy in Europe is turning upside down. Mikhail Gorbachev's proposal to accept the Reagan administration's so-called "zero option" and eliminate all intermediate-range nuclear weapons from Europe has the support of all the Reaganite hard-liner conservatives. (Indeed, the hardest liner of them all, Assistant Defense Secretary Richard Perle, dreamed it up in 1981.) Meanwhile the pro-arms-control, Trilateralist, Council-on-Foreign-Relations liberal establishment has qualms. The Reaganites see an INF treaty as a way of satisfying arms control pressure (and giving the president a triumphal summit) without sacrificing Star Wars. The liberal establishment shares the concern of European leaders that the absence of American nuclear missiles in Europe will weaken our commitment to Europe's defense, and weaken the Western alliance generally.

No doubt by design, Gorbachev's proposal and the coming negotiations over it are going to put strains on U.S. relations with Western Europe, and turn up the heat under the long-simmering question of the future of NATO. The Europeans, who gave us such a hard time about putting the missiles in over the past several years, are now going to give us a hard time about taking them out.

This no doubt will annoy Americans of all political stripes: left-wingers who want nuclear disarmament, right-wingers who see the allegedly feckless and decadent Europeans as more hindrance than help in pursuing an interventionist foreign policy. Americans will ask why we should deny ourselves an arms control treaty in order to enhance a nuclear deterrent that is only necessary because the Europeans won't mount an adequate conventional defense of their own societies. This will segue into the more general question of why we are spending an estimated $50 billion a year to defend a prosperous Europe anyway. Meanwhile, if the treaty does go through, the Europeans' feeling that America is abandoning them and dealing with the Soviets over their heads will stir resentments on their side, too.

THIS SITUATION poses great risks, but it also creates great opportunities for a Democratic Party looking to the 1988 presidential campaign. One risk is that—as in the tax reform debate—the Democrats, through cowardice and a lack of imagination, will get outflanked by Republicans portraying themselves as more populist on the one hand and more realistic on the other. The populist angle in foreign policy is to put American interests ahead of dominating Europe; the realistic angle is to put the Soviets on the defensive. The Democrats' opportunity is to move first: exploit the Europe issue to win elections, and, incidentally, to remake the world as a better, safer place.

A smart Democratic presidential candidate could reconcile three very good ideas about Europe that used to be thought of as mutually exclusive: one right-wing, one left-wing, and one of mixed ideological pedigree.

The good idea traditionally associated with the right is that the division of Europe based on the U.S.-Soviet agreement reached at Yalta in 1945 is intolerable. The dissidents of Central Europe stress that there can be no real peace throughout Europe until Soviet-bloc regimes makes peace with their citizens. Respect for human rights, they say, is the prerequisite for peace in Europe. But how to guarantee human rights? The Helsinki Pact of 1975, which included human rights agreements while ratifying Soviet domination, did help Central European dissidents put pressure on their governments. But these gains proved easy to roll back by force. Only when the Warsaw Pact is dissolved will these countries be free enough of Soviet domination to observe the Helsinki Pact provisions for free travel and exchange of ideas.

The second attractive idea, usually associated with the left, is a nuclear-free Europe "from Poland to Portugal," to use the phrase of English disarmament leader E. P. Thompson. He argues that there is no political dispute among European countries that requires nuclear confrontation;

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European dependence on U.S. nuclear protection is simply a form of servility to Washington. This is speciousness in the service of the truth. No, France and Italy don't have insurmountable differences with Poland and Czechoslovakia—except insofar as those countries' armies are instruments of Soviet policy and staging areas for the Red Army. A pretty big exception. But the logic of depending on the United States for protection from the Soviets does require that Washington be given the final say over the fate of Europe in the event of nuclear crisis. The installation of the U.S.-controlled Pershing and cruise missiles in 1983 was a perfect illustration of Europe's loss of sovereignty.

The European left has envisioned regaining this sovereignty by being more pacific. Without the bully-boy Americans, it is said, the Soviet threat to Europe would go away. No need for missiles, no need for a conventional military buildup. This wishful thinking is why Central Europeans have long regarded Western peace activists with what Czech playwright Vaclav Havel delicately calls "a certain reticence." The Western European peace movement, judging by its growing relations with the dissidents (see "Borders of the Mind" by Jacques Rupnik, TNR, March 9) is at last paying attention, if not adjusting its thinking.

The third attractive idea is that Europe, with an income per capita and total GNP similar to that of the United States, ought to take care of itself. This idea has adherents across the political spectrum: left-wing critics of the American imperium; neoliberal budget-crunchers; conservatives who want to revive the American spirit with a wide variety of dubious foreign adventures and find the Europeans' caution akin to appeasement. Critics note that the American pledge to incinerate West Germany in response to a conventional attack on Europe is not a terribly credible threat anyway, and argue that overreliance on America may actually be preventing the Europeans from growing up, shaping up, and defending themselves.

THE ATLANTIC alliance has been the foundation of the postwar West. After nearly 45 years any international arrangement is bound to have outlived its intent. Both the Mansfield amendment of the 1970s and the Nunn amendment of the 1980s came close to starting the process of an American pullout from Europe, if not the actual renunciation of NATO. Fierce economic competition, huge budget deficits, and reduced social spending are only going to make such legislation politically more tempting.

The smart and visionary Democratic presidential candidate would turn voter resentments toward a nobler purpose by proposing a second Yalta conference to undo the results of the first one. Perhaps the United States could make a virtue of the inevitable and call for the dissolution of NATO along with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact: the ultimate zero option. The savings could be brought home to restore the safety net, improve our schools, and regain our position in the world economy. The prospect of similar savings for the smaller and more primitive Soviet economy might tempt Gorbachev. Letting Central Europe go neutral and liberalize—"Finlandize"—itself might be acceptable in return for pulling out U.S. troops. (And Finland is a pretty nice place, especially compared to Romania.) All of Europe would appreciate the chance to become more autonomous from the superpowers.

Of course, the idea of Yalta II is farfetched and unlikely. But no more so than the very worthwhile agreement that could have been reached at Reykjavik. Of course, there are enormous political obstacles, such as German reunification and what minimal level of nuclear weaponry is needed, but none that can't be explored. The main point is that the taboo against discussing the problem of Yalta should be broken. Of course, some will claim that the Soviets will never accept such a discussion and that the politician who proposes it is engaged in nothing but a public relations gesture to appease European public opinion. That was said of the zero option, and here we are.

JEFFERSON MORLEY

So evil isn't banal after all.

DEMJANJUK IN JERUSALEM

IT IS POINTLESS, at this late date, to worry about an absence of awareness of the Holocaust. What art could not accomplish, television did. The Holocaust is famous. It is frantically remembered. But as what? That is the problem that must now trouble the custodians of memory. The fear that the world will forget must now give way to the fear that the world will remember wrongly. What ideas, what images, what feelings will stick? And the correction of the memory is what the trial of John Demjanjuk in Jerusalem may accomplish.

Demjanjuk is accused of war crimes in the death camp of Treblinka, where he is alleged to have worked efficiently and enthusiastically, whipping and torturing the Jews he was assisting into the gas chambers. Survivors of Treblinka (there were 50, out of 850,000) have identified Demjanjuk as "Ivan the Terrible," the Ukrainian guard whose abominations were striking even in that charnel house. "You expect beatings, but he held a sword and cut live flesh from human beings." (Demjanjuk asserts he is a victim of mistaken identity.) Judging by the photographs, Demjanjuk might be a Nazi by Hals. He sits in the courtroom (really a converted movie theater) looking like the mechanic he became in Cleveland, a thick, plain, beefy man, the very image of coarseness, the very opposite of lucidity.

The very opposite, in short, of Adolf Eichmann, his only predecessor in the Israeli dock. Eichmann was the man in the glass booth, where he may as well have sat, too, when he performed his perfidious duties. A detached man with theories and with tastes, with an air of physical punctiliousness, a war criminal of some ele-

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gance, ridiculously proud of his mind.

At first the comparison between Eichmann and Demjanjuk turned many Israelis against the current trial. Eichmann had set a kind of standard, of genocide and of gentility. He was responsible for millions of deaths, and he seemed willing to join his prosecutors in discussions of principle. Demjanjuk is a kind of comedown, a debasement of precedent. He was, after all, only a minion, appearing where his masters Bormann or Mengele should have appeared.

Not least because of the prominence, even the pathological prominence, of the Holocaust in contemporary Jewish culture, the Demjanjuk trial seemed *de trop* to many Israelis. "Who Cares?" was the headline of an Israeli political weekly. "My generation's emotions were burned out during the Eichmann trial," a prominent liberal politician told reporters. "That, for most of us, closed the books on the subject." It was not long, however, before the emotions of another generation came to matter. Within a week of the trial's opening, the courtroom was packed, and the "educational" significance of the event was the conventional wisdom.

EVEN FOR the new generation, the education may be redundant, except in reminding a captious Israeli citizenry of one of the state's reasons for being. But another sort of education about the Nazis may still be required—precisely to correct a conception of the Holocaust that remained in the wake of the Eichmann trial and the ocean of commentary upon it. The proceedings in Jerusalem in 1961 inculcated, especially among intellectuals and historians, an image of the Holocaust that gave pride of place to its impersonality. Eichmann had been a bureaucrat, a manager. The great drama of his capture and conviction produced a powerful interest in the bureaucratic and managerial character of modern mass murder. The Eichmann trial exposed a man who was not only a fiend, but an expert. More, it exposed a man who was a fiend because he was an expert. Thus its subject finally was not a man, but a system—the application to evil of the technological and administrative achievements of the modern industrial state.

What struck many was the abstractness, not the concreteness, of Eichmann's crime. Historians and other writers became fascinated by the distance of the killers from the killed. Gerald Reitlinger: "Like the aerial bomber, the bureaucrat does not see his kill." Raul Hilberg: "The destruction of the Jews was a total process, comparable in its diversity to a modern war, a mobilization, or a national reconstruction . . . an alignment of agency after agency in a machinery of destruction." Karl-Dietrich Bracher: "Here we are faced by the completely impersonal, 'bureaucratic' extermination of a people classified as a species of subhumans. . . ."

Of course the organizational analysis of the Nazi genocide holds a large part of the truth. It certainly broaches what was new about the Nazi atrocity. But the fascination with Nazi bloodlessness came to infect the study of it, as in Ernst Nolte's repulsive description of the Holocaust as "nothing else [than the] solving of problems connected with industrialization by means of disposing of a large group of human beings." An Eichmannesque spirit clings to such words.

Nothing Eichmannesque clings to Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. But it was Arendt who made the bureaucratic nature of modern genocide a commonplace with her notion of "the banality of evil." According to Arendt, Eichmann "was not Iago and not Macbeth" (for the New York intellectual nothing is too large to be captured by a reference to literature) and "had no motives at all." What distinguished Eichmann, finally, was "remoteness from reality."

The Eichmann trial left Eichmann, then, as the type of the Nazi. That is the type that the Demjanjuk trial must qualify. Although Demjanjuk seems less well-defined, less well-articulated, than Eichmann, he seems also more vivid, more familiar. No remoteness from reality here. "Ivan" was the man who looked the innocents in the eyes, who laid his hands on their flesh, who listened to their screams—the man for whom killing Jews was a social act, not an administrative procedure. The Eichmanns could not have destroyed the Jews of Europe without the Demjanjuks. The men without motives were powerless without the men with motives. Without men such as "Ivan," all the technology and all the administrative apparatus in the world would have availed the Nazis nothing. What was genocide in the case of Eichmann was homicide after homicide after homicide in the case of "Ivan" and his colleagues, into the thousands and tens of thousands.

In Israel some have argued against Demjanjuk's trial because he was a cog. They do not understand that they are making the argument for the trial. In the death camp machine, there were many cogs, but there were no mere cogs. The inhumanity of these murders has been plain for years. It is time to see their humanity, which is what the survivors still see. (Humanity meaning more often human than humane.) The survivors in the courtroom will have to persuade the judges that Demjanjuk is "Ivan," as they already have done in American courtrooms. It is fitting that a trial that may result in the correction of memory should turn so completely upon the reliability of memory.

LEON WIESELTIER

The president's denial syndrome.

REALITY? JUST SAY NO

SEVERAL DAYS before Ronald Reagan made his March 4 speech on Iranamok, the word from his friends and advisers was that he was still unwilling to admit his mistake. And despite the expressions of sorrow and regret that ultimately were written into the speech, those predictions were right. He has yet to explain adequately his own responsibility in the arms deal, and it is still not clear whether he will be able to recover from

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four months of dissembling, dithering, and silence.

In answer to the question that began as a joke and grew to be the focal point of the Tower Commission's questions—What did the president forget and when did he forget it?—Reagan finally claimed, "I don't remember—period." How could a president forget authorizing a violation of his own oft-stated anti-terrorism policy? Coming after a yes-no-maybe answer, Reagan's disclaimer is hard to believe. Hard, that is, for the rest of us. What may really be involved here, however, is not a memory lapse, not a legal denial, but psychological denial. Reagan apparently cannot remember what he cannot admit to himself.

For months the president insisted that he didn't swap arms for hostages. It remained for Tower Commission member Brent Scowcroft to explain that President Reagan's "concept" of his Iran initiative "was not accurately reflected in the reality of the operation." Yet even in his confessional speech, Reagan was unable to extricate himself from his fantasies. "A few months ago I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that is true, but the facts and the evidence tell me it is not." In other words, throughout the crisis, and even to some extent at the moment of what was supposed to be a mea culpa, the president of the United States denied the truth to himself.

Reagan also defiantly asserted that he never authorized the shipment of arms to Iran through Israel, despite former national security adviser Robert McFarlane's testimony to the contrary. The fine print in the Tower Commission report makes it clear that there were at least six, and possibly eight, meetings in the summer of 1985 at which Reagan was told about the proposed discussions with Iran, including the suggestion that eventually arms transfers would be involved. According to McFarlane, the president was "excessively enthusiastic," and said words to the effect, "Gee, that sounds pretty good."

AFTER McFARLANE'S departure in December 1985, the president was briefed on the Iran initiative at his almost daily meetings with John Poindexter, who was aware that funds generated from U.S. arms sales to Iran were being diverted through a Swiss bank account to the *contras*. But the president's questions were perfunctory, and he preferred doodling and telling anecdotes. When he did ask questions they were confined to the hostages' well-being and the timing of the hostages' release. Presumably he was dreaming ahead to the day, surely to precede the crucial congressional midterm elections, when he would stand on the White House lawn re-enacting one of his favorite roles, that of Commander Reagan, welcoming home his hostages.

This hallmark of the Reagan character has now been labeled a "management style," implying that it is a conscious choice. That style has been described as "detachment" from the details of government. This is misleading. When the president, refusing to listen to the protests of his Cabinet officers, dispatched two Marines (McFarlane and Oliver North) to pay off the government that bankrolled the Beirut barracks bombing in which 241 of their fellow Marines were killed, he had to go well beyond detachment.

We are all familiar with the defense mechanism of denial. When one is first confronted with a shocking loss or crisis, the unconscious mind may generate a temporary "I don't believe it, this can't be happening" response until the ego is ready to deal with the new reality. This is normal, and we all do it from time to time. But Ronald Reagan has always stayed on the surface of events, absorbed facts selectively, and denied the dark side of life. Denial of unpleasant realities long ago became Reagan's characteristic problem-solving style.

The distortions produced by such defense mechanisms become part of a person's view of the world. Truths too uncomfortable to admit are unconsciously altered or postponed, and the altered truth then becomes *subjectively* true. The president cannot do what the whole country is demanding—get on top of the facts and admit his own mistakes—unless his psychological defenses allow him to admit those facts to himself. Is this possible, at the age of 76?

SINCE HE WAS a child, Reagan has been denying harsh realities and concocting his own, more pleasant alternatives. As Garry Wills points out in *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home*, Reagan's father was a salesman who played fast and loose with facts and passed himself off as a "practipedist," a highfalutin title for a man with no credentials other than a correspondence course degree and an X-ray machine in his shoe store. A shy boy in immense glasses, Reagan seized on make-believe for his self-presentation. He acted out roles created for him by his mother in church skits. And always he denied the darkest aspect of his childhood—the hard-drinking father who shamed him.

From the time Reagan entered radio, then Hollywood, then TV, his gift for pretense was rewarded again and again. He earned his reputation in radio during the Depression by concocting whole ball games from the scraps of paper that came off a telegraph relay while he sat in a studio 300 miles away. Years later, Governor Reagan was saluted in the California press for refusing to acknowledge the unpleasant or to admit mistakes. It became axiomatic that "he just puts the negative behind him and goes on."

What happens when a lifelong denier comes up against a problem he can't deny? He does all the odd, disconcerting things that people who have seen Reagan over the past months have described variously as "monumental indifference," "stubbornness," "sloth," "shuffling," "drifting into oft-repeated anecdotes," wearing a necktie over Christmas that played "Jingle Bells," and in every way refusing to come to grips with the reality. Is this, as John Tower would have it, an aberration?

When the Iran-*contra* scandal first broke, the president relied on the coping strategies that had always worked for him. First, the salesman's speech. He had previously been

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able to make us believe that *he* believed what he read off the TelePrompTer. When his deep voice quivered with emotion, and he talked of his "visions" and the "miracle" that is America, it was as though some divine afflatus had descended upon him to point the way for all of us. That was the Reagan magic. Suddenly his dream-spinning solipsism didn't work. He tried using the Reagan charm on the media in a rare press conference on November 19. But they kept throwing facts at him, and with no script, he had nothing to fall back on but confusion, dissembling, and denial. Eleven of his answers on the Iran scandal began with the word "no."

To learn that half the country believed him to be lying, to be caught in a quagmire over the very issue that pulled down his predecessor, to be hounded week after week by leaders of his own party who told him to wake up and face reality, to undergo surgery again only to come back to the White House and be confronted with unpleasant facts about what the government did under his stewardship—all of it may have strained Reagan's mental powers to a dangerous degree. For denial is a slow poison.

The most convenient explanation for the president's mental predicament is that he is getting old. It is true that aging exaggerates any distortion in a person's problem-solving abilities. But Reagan's failure to perform his duty is part of a much deeper psychological pattern. Campaigning in 1980, Reagan defused the age issue by promising the American people that he would undergo regular tests for senility if he became president. As the popular incumbent in '84, however, Reagan retreated from that pledge and substituted a Catch-22. He would take the tests only if there was some "indication that I was drifting." He added, "Nothing like that has happened."

"Drifting" is mild compared to the judgments rendered on Ronald Reagan's mental acuity in the last few weeks. Former Senator Edmund Muskie admitted on "Face the Nation" that the three members of the Tower panel "were all appalled by the absence of the kind of alertness and vigilance to his job . . . that one expects of a president." Even Howard Baker, before being named White House chief of staff, questioned the president's ability to remember complex matters over a long period of time: "You found that the half-life of that memory was short." Apparently the president's need to protect himself psychologically may have prevented him from taking even routine steps to protect himself legally on Iranamok.

YET IF Ronald Reagan came to assume that he was above reality, it was in large measure because we the electorate coddled him into believing it. Voters, followed by Congress and the media, lowered their standards to accommodate this hypnotically happy president. He didn't have to work a full week or keep notes or referee policy disputes among his advisers. No amount of press reports of his misstatements of fact seemed to register. On the contrary, they became part of fond Reagan lore. It was his stock-in-trade to "forget" facts that interfere with his perception of himself as pure in motive and true to his word. The "Teflon President" sobriquet, intended by Representative Pat Schroeder as a criticism, was construed as a compliment.

Under Reagan we all developed the habit of denial. Here at last was the president who embodied our fantasy vision of America: a bullet-proof, media-proof, crisis-proof leader—the only man in the country who never seemed to age. The real question is not whether he can make it through the next two years, if half-asleep. The more sobering possibility is that we the electorate, content to partake of his self-indulgence as our own, will simply roll over and beg to finish the dream.

GAIL SHEEHY

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Medicare and the baby boom generation.

DEATHBED POLITICS

PRESIDENT REAGAN has endorsed the plan of his secretary of health and human services, Dr. Otis Bowen, and it now seems certain that catastrophic health insurance for the elderly will be the first addition to the welfare state in over a decade. The only complaint from Democrats in Congress is that the administration plan doesn't go far enough, because it covers only hospitalization, not nursing homes and home health services.

Once we're done with this agreeable expansion of benefits, however, our society's thinking about Medicare will have to get more serious. The program is careening toward insolvency. It already faces a fiscal crisis far greater than the one that provoked the Social Security "fix" of 1983. One mild recession will instantly exhaust Medicare's main hospital insurance trust fund. Under all but the most optimistic forecasts, the fund will run out by the turn of the century, no matter what happens to the economy.

One amazing statistic illuminates the Medicare quandary: despite the $75 billion the government will spend this year on Medicare, the elderly are actually paying a higher percentage of their income every year for health care than they did in 1965, when Medicare was established. Medicare now covers less than half of the elderly's total health care expenses. This is partly because of higher deductibles and co-payments imposed by the Reagan administration. In 1980 Medicare started paying hospital benefits after an elderly patient ran up $180 in expenses; today the deductible for hospital expenses is $520. But it's also partly due to inflation in medical costs, for which Medicare itself deserves much of the blame.

Without fundamental changes, Medicare won't be able to meet the needs of today's middle-aged Americans and

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their children. Medicare has been sold to the American people as a social insurance program, just like Social Security. The government promises younger Americans that by contributing taxes to Medicare, they will later become entitled to benefits like those the current elderly receive. But today's senior citizens, on average, are collecting benefits worth 12 to 14 times the value of their previous contributions in Medicare taxes. The part of Medicare that pays doctor bills was originally intended to be 50 percent financed by premiums paid by the elderly participants. Now it gets three-quarters of its operating costs from the government's general revenues. This is sobering news for supporters of the Bowen plan, which supposedly will cover the entire cost of doctor bills with a $4.92 monthly charge to elderly participants.

Medicare may be able to avoid a crisis for the rest of this century—a time when members of the enormous postwar baby boom generation will be passing through their peak earning and tax-paying years. At the same time, the rate of growth in the population over 65 will taper off, temporarily, because of the low birthrate during the 1920s and '30s.

But shortly after the year 2000, these trends will reverse. By 2010, and certainly by 2020, Medicare and the health care sector in general will both be overwhelmed by the rapid aging of the population, as the baby boom generation approaches old age itself. Today about one-third of all health care spending in the United States is consumed by the 12 percent of the population over 65. By 2030, 21.1 percent of the population will be that age or older, with the fastest growth among the very old, who tend to have the most costly medical needs.

Unless the economy grows at an unprecedented rate in the coming decades, we will be forced into a horrible choice. Either the next generation will be burdened with the cost of supporting the baby boomers in old age—a burden far higher than the one currently being shouldered—or the baby boomers will have to submit to reduced old age benefits. That would most likely include limited access to some costly, life-preserving medical treatments.

MEDICARE'S DISMAL outlook raises basic questions about the program's scope and purpose. Why should the mere circumstance of reaching one's 65th birthday entitle one to government-financed health care? On average, the elderly are now better off than the younger generation. But obviously, averages apart, there are many on both sides of that age who are needy, and many who are not. The rate of infant mortality in the United States is among the highest of all industrialized nations. Meanwhile, for lack of money or the insurance it will buy, thousands of working-aged Americans die every year of theoretically curable diseases and injuries. An estimated 36 million Americans below age 65, primarily the young and the working poor, lack any medical insurance at all.

It is by no means self-evident that subsidizing all those in need would be more expensive than subsidizing all the elderly, needy and non-needy alike. What has turning 65 got to do with a right to decent health care? Granting pensions on the basis of seniority doesn't increase a younger person's chances of dying before he becomes old enough to collect back his or her contributions. By contrast, rationing health care in favor of senior citizens does exactly that.

This raises another issue. Many elderly are financially secure and do not require public funds to pay for their health care. Providing such funds amounts to an inheritance protection program. For the affluent elderly, Medicare benefits have the effect of freeing up money that they can then pass on to their heirs, and often do. This is of obvious benefit to those fortunate enough to enjoy the favor of a rich parent or grandparent. But why should the poor, or any of the rest of us, be taxed just so that such people can have larger bequests?

If entitlement to Medicare is justified on some basis other than need, why does such an entitlement not also apply to younger Americans, regardless of *their* means? Either access to publicly funded health care is a right of citizenship or it is not. If it is, on what basis is such an entitlement denied to younger Americans? If it is not a right of citizenship, why is it extended to everyone—rich and poor alike—lucky enough to have reached age 65? There is no particular reason to believe, for example, that today's elderly will be the last generation to live through a major depression or to fight a major war.

IT IS SOMETIMES argued that today's elderly supported their own parents through old age, and this gives them a right to old age subsidies from today's young. It's true that before Social Security and Medicare, the young were often called upon to support their elderly parents. But not all of today's senior citizens made such a sacrifice. And for those who did, their support was contingent upon the actual, individual need of their parents, not upon their parents' age alone. It's doubtful that rich fathers either expected or got payments from their children merely because they passed 65. If current entitlements of age are to be justified by the patterns of intergenerational financial assistance that once prevailed within families, then it follows that these programs should be means-tested.

No incremental reforms will be sufficient to solve these moral and fiscal problems. The experience of other countries shows that it is possible to provide universal access to health care at lower cost per capita than what Americans now collectively spend on medicine. But the means used to contain health care costs would offend or frighten many Americans. Essentially, they involve massive regulation or nationalization of health care providers, reduced consumer choice, and, in the case of Great Britain, denial of some forms of expensive treatment to the elderly and the terminally ill.

The least radical reform that stands any chance of enduring success (and it's a slim chance at that) is to means-test Medicare. One relatively unobtrusive way to do this might be to tax the estates of wealthy Medicare patients after they have died, in proportion to the Medicare subsi-

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dies they received. Similarly, Medicare deductibles and co-payments could be set according to the beneficiary's ability to pay, which might also make more resources available to the elderly poor.

At the same time, we all have to think seriously about what we really want our health care system to achieve. A third of all Medicare spending goes to patients who die within a year. Do we want a system that spares virtually no expense to prolong the life of the terminally ill for a few weeks or months—often in a comatose state, or in a humiliating or painful condition? Or do we want a system that concentrates primarily on helping more people make it to their golden years in the first place?

So long as we continue borrowing massively against the future income of today's children—through the budget and trade deficits, through inadequate investment in education and, more generally, in increasing productivity—the trade-off between health care for the young and the old will become increasingly stark and unavoidable. This hardly means we should ignore the unmet health care needs of the current elderly. But it does mean that we must also concentrate on the enormous burdens presented by and to the future elderly. Medicare is going broke. Social Security is in only marginally better shape. Let's tackle those problems before thinking up new ways to compound our old age crisis.

PHILLIP LONGMAN

Phillip Longman is research director at Americans for Generational Equity. His book, *Born to Pay: The New Politics of Aging*, will be released by Houghton Mifflin in August. The views expressed in this article and the book do not necessarily represent those of AGE or its supporters.

The man who isn't there.

VICE PRESIDENT SUNBEAM

BY MORTON KONDRACKE

PICKING THE NEXT president ought to be easy, especially for Republicans. Who could be more fit for the job than George Bush? He is a genuine war hero who flew 58 Navy combat missions off aircraft carriers in the Pacific during World War II and won a Distinguished Flying Cross. When his plane was hit by flak, he finished his bombing run before bailing out, survived repeated depth chargings aboard the submarine that rescued him, and elected to return to combat instead of rotating home. He was Phi Beta Kappa at Yale—no intellectual, says a classmate, but a hard worker who consistently got A-minuses—and also captain of the baseball team and the biggest BMOC. Instead of going to work for his father at Brown Brothers Harriman, he went to Texas to prove himself—albeit with a family stake—and made it in the offshore drilling business. He's not only met a payroll; he's had bleeding ulcers as well.

Had he stayed in oil a few more years, he might now be really rich. Instead, he cashed in for $1.8 million in 1966 and followed a plan dating at least as far back as college to go into politics and try to become president. He's risen from county chairman to congressman to United Nations ambassador to Republican national chairman to ambassador to China to director of the Central Intelligence Agency to full-time presidential candidate to vice president. If no truly great initiatives or achievements attach to his name, neither do any great scandals or disasters—so far, including Iranamok. Certainly he has the best range of experience of any candidate in the field for 1988.

Unlike many politicians, he has a strong and stable family life. And he seems extraordinarily kind and decent to friends and those stricken with misfortune. When right-wing politico Terry Dolan died, reportedly of AIDS, Bush made immediate and lengthy phone calls to comfort members of his family. When former national security adviser Robert McFarlane attempted suicide out of an apparent belief that the Iranamok scandal had finished him in public life, Bush said in a press conference that he would welcome McFarlane's advice in the future. Recently departed White House communications director Patrick Buchanan calls him "Dink Stover, the ultimate Ivy League gentleman of the 1930s . . . a real sweetheart of a human being," and says Bush did him any number of undisclosed favors by getting difficult problems resolved in the Oval Office.

A college acquaintance who's watched his career develop calls Bush "sunniness all through, but very little else—a sunbeam." But that's not strictly true. Though born to wealth and comfort, he has been touched by tragedy, losing a three-year-old daughter to leukemia. And he has experienced defeat, including two unsuccessful campaigns for the U.S. Senate and one for the presidency. Both friends and critics say he is dogged and determined, so much so that his 1980 campaign manager, James Baker (now treasury secretary), had to pull him out of the race without his approval lest it damage his chance to be Reagan's running mate. His supporters are organizing a campaign this time

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that can keep afloat, regardless of setbacks, all the way to the convention. They all say that nothing can make him quit.

But despite his qualifications and his continuing status as the Republican front-runner, there are major questions about Bush's fitness to be president. Polls indicate that the public doubts his leadership ability, independence of mind, depth of conviction, personal strength, and political decisiveness. This is partly due to the institution of the vice presidency—that Great Emasculator—which seems to require its occupant to cheer and support the leader slavishly, never to question his judgment with witnesses present, and to avoid competing for the limelight. As one of his relatives put it, though, Bush has been "almost too good a vice president," appearing so sycophantic as to seem born to the role. In the most notorious cases, Bush switched on abortion from being essentially pro-choice to become Reaganite pro-life ("there has been . . . an evolution in my position," he conceded), and he tried to deny that he had ever used the term "voodoo economics" to describe Reagan's program. NBC political correspondent Ken Bode caught him on that one by digging up TV tape from the 1980 primaries.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Even aside from his vice presidential role, though, in public Bush repeatedly conveys the impression of a gentleman twit utterly lacking in *gravitas*. In a famous case, when he meant to be talking to reporters about stepping into political shit, he called it "deep doo-doo." One can chalk that up to preppy breeding, perhaps. But before an interview with Japanese journalists, Bush greeted their American escort with a bow and an "Ah—sooo," fortunately just out of earshot of the Japanese. No breeding there.

Some of his public performances raise questions about his legendary decency. In fact, they make him seem mean, without conveying any sense of inner strength, as though he could afford to be kind only to those who pose him no threat. In the 1984 vice presidential debate, Bush falsely accused Democrats Geraldine Ferraro and Walter Mondale of charging that U.S. Marines in Lebanon had "died in shame," and the next day tried to be one of the boys with a group of longshoremen by sniggering that he'd "kicked a little ass" in the debate with Ferraro. It was days before he'd apologize. Instead he sought refuge in abstruse definitions of "shame" and in poll numbers showing he had bested Ferraro.

Last year he accused New York governor Mario Cuomo of somehow casting aspersions on all American immigrants when Cuomo complained about slander directed at Italian-Americans. Bush's staff has tried to pin the blame for that excess on speechwriter Fred Khedouri, but after all, it was Bush who said it.

Bush's supporters claim that there are really two George Bushes: the often disappointing public man whom reporters and the public see, and the private man, who's at times relaxed and funny, at other times decisive, even tough. According to Representative Jim Leach of Iowa, "People want to judge a candidate by how he performs in front of a microphone, but presidential decisions are made in a room, not in front of a microphone. In a room, there are few people more impressive and presidential than George Bush."

Leach's opinion is sustained by many Reagan administration officials who say Bush is invariably well-informed when meeting foreign leaders, fair and open when leading a discussion among U.S. officials, and able to get to the heart of an analytical difficulty. According to Marlin Fitzwater, formerly Bush's spokesman and now Reagan's, "I have no doubt about Bush's toughness. Outside, he's all the New England gentleman. But when you close the door, he's all Texas—'kick ass and take names.' I've seen it with congressmen he's helped and he wants something from. He's entirely capable of saying, 'Look, fella, this is what I did for you and this is what I expect. Either you're with me or against me.' "

Maybe so, but personal strength and leadership talent are very hard to find in Bush's vice presidential record, especially in his performance—public and private—in Iranamok. In fact, for six years, Bush has been very much like a shadow or a sunbeam. He has left very little impression of any kind—for good or ill.

Bush barely is mentioned in the Tower Commission report, for example. "He wasn't a player, just an adviser to the president," said commission member Brent Scowcroft. "There was no evidence on him at all other than atten-

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dance at a couple of meetings, and sometimes people weren't even sure he was there. Given that, we just left him out."

Unless subsequent investigations develop new information, Bush may get off experiencing only secondary political effects from the scandal—"catching the dickens," as he put it on a trip to Iowa. But before the scandal broke he told *Business Week*, "I'm in on everything. If our policies aren't working, I can't say, 'Wait a minute, I'm not to blame.' " He ought to be held to that standard by the press, by his presidential opponents, and by voters during the 1988 campaign. So far, he and his aides have been ducking full disclosure about the scandal or pleading faulty memory.

HIS CHIEF OF STAFF, Craig Fuller, says Bush has "no specific recollection when" he first learned of arms supplies to Iran, but believes it was in late summer or early fall 1985. Apparently he shared the information with no one. Bush has claimed he supported Reagan's decision as a strategic action designed to establish contact with potential Khomeini heirs in Iran. But he must have known from spending an hour a day with Reagan—from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., first with the chief of staff, then with the national security adviser—and from having lunch alone with him every Thursday that the president's chief concern was getting U.S. hostages out of Lebanon. At a February 12 press conference in Lansing, Michigan, he tried repeatedly to have it both ways about U.S. policy:

> I'll tell you what troubles me. There's a perception of trading arms for hostages. . . . I know that the policy of the U.S. government is not to trade arms for hostages, but when I see that perception and I see documents that raise that question, I'm deeply troubled by it, too. So . . . there will be plenty of time . . . for all these panels to reach a conclusion, and if the conclusion is that the U.S. government swapped arms for hostages, I would be the first to say, that is wrong, that is not the policy of the U.S. government.

In other words, regardless of what he personally witnessed, Bush's explanation of U.S. policy would depend upon what investigators managed to discover. Asked directly what side he took when Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and Secretary of State George Shultz opposed the arms-trading, Bush said:

> My position on the advice I give the president is, it's only discussed with him. Sometimes it results in a downer. Sometimes you've got to take a lot of political heat for that. Sometimes it doesn't affect things one way or another. But I'm not going to change that policy. Ah, I think the key players around there know I expressed certain reservations on certain aspects. I also see some things in the media that I know not to be true. I wish I could help you on that, but I'm not going to because it would undermine the very foundation of the vice presidency.

When the Tower report came out, Bush finally acknowledged that, yes, arms had been traded for hostages, and that it was wrong. The Tower board also reported that Bush had attended one crucial meeting last January 7 at which Weinberger and Shultz opposed the policy. Shultz told the board he felt that Bush supported it. If Bush actually did have "reservations," this was one key player who didn't know about them. Fuller says, "Not that we're upset or angry with Shultz, but the counsel that he [Bush] gave Reagan, he gave privately. He does not remember in a meeting indicating what his position was and I doubt that he's going to reveal it."

Fuller said of Bush's "reservations," though, that "as I understand them, they concerned the initiative to reach the factions in Iran through the Israelis," which would seem a less serious matter to be worried about than the undermining of anti-terrorist policy by trading arms for hostages. Even as Bush was sitting in on January 1986 meetings where trading was discussed, he was supervising the writing of an administration anti-terror document that specifically declares: "The U.S. government will make no concessions to terrorists. It will not pay ransoms, release prisoners, change its policies or agree to other acts which might encourage additional terrorism."

Does the Iran mess affect Bush's presidential fortunes? In Lansing, he came out with more double messages:

> I think it's hurt some. When you're there and don't run for cover, you take the flak. You take the bad with the good, and there's a lot of good out there. What I'll have to do is get the facts out. I'm confident in my own mind that I have nothing to hide. . . . I think it hurts someone like me who's been closely associated with the administration. If I want to take the credit for the good things . . . I have to be man enough to take the associational guilt.

Bush wants credit for the good that association with Reagan brings and for being man enough to take heat for what Reagan does wrong. But he hasn't let all the facts get out about his own positions, which makes it hard to judge whether he's someone who ought to move up to president. Bush has denied any knowledge of diversion of Iran arms funds to the Nicaraguan *contras*, but his national security aide, Donald Gregg, did discuss *contra* supplies with a former CIA colleague, Felix Rodriguez, and Bush's office was the first U.S. government agency to know that the plane carrying Eugene Hasenfus had been shot down in Nicaragua.

ALMOST ACROSS the board, Bush's activities as vice president are hidden. There are a few exceptions. He was the chairman of task forces that have done meritorious work in improving coordination of drug interdiction efforts and recommending deregulation and anti-terrorist policy. In 1985 he was responsible for overcoming State Department and Pentagon objections to use U.S. planes to airlift 800 Ethiopian Jews to Israel, saving them from almost certain starvation. He reportedly was leery about both Israel's invasion of Lebanon and U.S. peacekeeping intervention there, although he supported the latter policy. And it's known that he got the administration to restore tax breaks for oil companies after the Treasury's original tax reform proposal would have eliminated them. His 1983

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trip to read the riot act to El Salvador's military and to stop death squad activity was largely a script-reading exercise, but he reportedly supported it fully. It's not clear who led him to tell Ferdinand Marcos in 1981 that "we love your adherence to democratic principles," but he should have known better.

Bush has seized few initiatives as vice president and made few issues his own. There have been no kitchen debates with Russians, and on most of the great issues of the Reagan years, Bush's role is a mystery. Richard Perle does not know whose side Bush took in the battles between Caspar Weinberger and George Shultz over U.S.-Soviet relations and arms control. Former White House aides profess not to know how he stood on budget battles over defense spending and taxes in 1983 (though some say he was a defender and friend of former economic adviser Martin Feldstein, a vocal in-house critic of Reaganism). Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams says that Bush had "no visible impact" on Central America policy. "Nobody goes to him for help," said Abrams. "I can't ever remember him speaking up at meetings. He's never mentioned as a player. Maybe silence is consent." Pat Buchanan says, "Everybody [at the White House] respects him as an individual, but do they see him as a decisive political figure? You'll find question marks around the building, based on observation."

According to Fitzwater and other aides, all this is just the way Bush planned to carry off his loyal vice presidency. "He decided from the first that he was going to be an adviser and confidant to the president and was not going to participate in meetings. So he sits through Cabinet meetings, domestic policy meetings, National Security Council meetings, and does not say a word. It's the single biggest factor in making the vice presidency a functional unit, but it looks like he has no position on anything. . . . The benefit of all this is that he can stay out of things he doesn't want to get into and has an honest rationale for not commenting on things. But the downside is that you have a constituency of one and no other constituencies."

BUSH HAS MORE or less followed the vice presidential model established by Walter Mondale, although Mondale apparently was more active than Bush in quizzing the bureaucracy in the processes of policy formation and follow-through, and as a former senator also was more active in legislative strategy. Mondale's discretion in concealing his role produced political handicaps similar to Bush's, sometimes known as "the wimp factor."

Hubert Humphrey might have overcome the handicap in 1968 had he broken sooner from Lyndon Johnson over Vietnam. In 1984 Mondale did choose to identify a few issues in which he disagreed with Jimmy Carter, but there was no way that he could have won against Ronald Reagan. Bush, who in 1980 ran a campaign just like Carter's in 1976 (hoping to be the unknown who catches fire), will run in 1988 just like Mondale. Bush is the quintessential establishment candidate, heavy on money, endorsements, and state-by-state organization in the nomination contest.

As Bush's managers conceive it, the Republican race is between Bush and Anybody But Bush—sometimes known as "the Phenom Candidate," the 1988 GOP version of Gary Hart in 1984. Inevitably, they say, an alternative will emerge from Iowa, where Bush is currently trailing Senator Bob Dole, or New Hampshire, where Bush still leads the field. Then, as Mondale did in 1984, Bush will stop the Phenom in enough of the 16 primaries held on Super Tuesday, March 8, to end his surge. Finally, the contest will convert to trench warfare for delegates, which the Bush organization should win. Of course, the scenario ignores the possibility that Bush's support could collapse early, and that if Bush makes any mistakes, they are likely to be trumpeted by a hostile press.

Bush has a press problem, partly because he bounced reporters off his plane in 1984 and apparently tried to conceal his (completely defensible) troubles with the IRS, and partly because Bush is perceived to be a phony—a weak man posing as strong. To alter that perception, which is widespread in the public as well as the press, some Bush aides talk of the need for a "defining event," whereby Bush "shows strength." That's assumed to mean taking on some interest group. But since the word is out that Bush is looking for a group to play off against, any attempt to do it will be discounted—with derision.

WHAT BUSH needs to do is to be his own man—say what he's for and let the chips fall. That may be difficult because, as an aide says, Bush is naturally a cautious, pragmatic moderate and a compulsive actor rather than an abstract thinker or ideologue. However, beginning this spring he does plan to set out positions on economics, foreign policy, competitiveness, and education that would guide his presidency. Characteristically, he seems to be calculating carefully how far he can afford to move away from President Reagan and risk charges of disloyalty. "Some will say, 'That's a deviation from administration policy,'" he said recently. "And I can see where there might be a little bit of friction and contradiction. But I think the president would understand that. Every time there is light in between what I say and administration policy, some people will say I am jumping away from the president." That, he has vowed repeatedly—sometimes almost pathetically—he will never do.

Iranamok is a triple curse for Bush. It may yet tarnish him individually. It certainly dims the glow of his association with Reagan. And, the weaker the president, the less Bush will feel able to risk perceptions of disloyalty. On the other hand, it's a challenge. It means that Bush will not be able to win the nomination by right of primogeniture. He will have to fight for it. If there is strength in his character, he will have the opportunity to show it. And if he does get nominated, the testing could serve to prepare him for the general election, where both candidates for president will be measured not only against each other, but against Mikhail Gorbachev. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Sydney, 1922; Baltimore, 1963

Kangaroo, nobody's favorite D. H. Lawrence novel, is set in Australia and has now been made into a film, by Australians. Lawrence and his wife, Frieda, arrived in Australia at the end of April 1922, and left on August 10. During six weeks of that short stay he wrote almost all of his substantial novel and crammed it with observations about the country and the people. In a way *Kangaroo* can be read as the report of an Olympian journalist; and since Richard and Harriet Somers are deliberately thin disguises for Lawrence and Frieda, it can also be read as an autobiographical work. These aspects of *Kangaroo* are fascinating. But Lawrence devised a political plot to center all the rest on, and that plot is problematic. Lawrence had no such experience in Australia, nor, say the biographers, was 1922 a politically restive year there. Lawrence brought along with him some dissatisfactions with democracy and some concern about vitiated postwar European society, and he arbitrarily used Australia, chiefly Sydney and environs, as a stage on which to dramatize them.

Kangaroo
(Cineplex Odeon)
Tin Men
(Touchstone)

A secretive but growing fascist movement wants Somers to join, as poet and celebrant. He is also wooed by the Communist Party. He chooses neither; merely observes; and is still merely observing when the two parties clash in a bloody street battle. Soon after, Somers and Harriet (like Lawrence and Frieda) leave for America. *Look! We Have Come Through!* is the title of an early book of Lawrence's poems. *Look! We Have Passed Through!* could be the title of this novel.

But *Kangaroo* is the title, not only as metonymy for Australia but because it is the sobriquet of the fascist leader. The most curious aspect of the book's whole political element is that this leader is a Jew, a rich Jew; thus Lawrence's obsession-repulsion vis-à-vis Jews figures in Somers's political decisions, or lack of them. (Ruminations on Jews run throughout. When the Theory of Relativity comes up in conversation, Somers says with a laugh, "It needed a Jew to lead us this last step in liberty.") None of the others in the movement says anything about their leader's Jewishness: it is Somers to whom it matters.

Every trace of this fixation is purged from Evan Jones's screenplay. This may be tactful, but it is certainly untrue to the book. Additionally, Jones makes one structural change, which is understandable yet simplifying. He begins with material that in the novel is flashback: the experiences of Somers and Harriet in Cornwall in 1916, where the authorities badger them because Harriet is German and where Somers must take a physical exam for possible induction into the army. (He is rejected because of tuberculosis.) The torments of humiliation that Somers feels in both cases strike the viewer as somewhat slight compared to what other men were undergoing at the time; still, Somers felt those torments, and they helped form the mind that was rebelling against society.

Jones condenses, of course, but keeps much of the dialogue and, except for the points cited above, keeps much of the silhouette of the original. In fact, he underscores some features, like Somers's attraction to a neighbor's wife and the police action after the street brawl. Jones also retains the Lawrentian strain of homoeroticism: Kangaroo wants desperately for Somers to love him—ostensibly as a brother, although there is one exceptionally warm embrace.

But the screenplay falters, for two reasons. The first, unavoidable, is that the best life of the book is missing, the life in Lawrence's prose. The second is probably also unavoidable: *Kangaroo* is compelling only insofar as we read it autobiographically, as a view from inside Lawrence. Somers *does* almost nothing in the film: he talks, and he accompanies others who are doing things. Either we are absorbed by what is happening to Somers during his Australian stay because we are made privy to what is happening to Lawrence—in fact and in retrospection—or the work sags. The film doesn't take us inside the protagonist, and since he carries so little of the action, the result is a picture mostly about some Australians and an English bystander.

It is hurt further by Colin Friels's performance as Somers. Friels, who looks much like Alan Bates bearded, is adequate as a mortal, but he conveys nothing of the superhuman that Ian McKellen touched as Lawrence in the biographical *Priest of Love* (1981). Friels's lack of larger-than-life dimension helps to blunt the enterprise. On the other hand, that fine actress Judy Davis, last seen in *A Passage to India*, gives maximum possible color and nuance to Harriet. Hugh Keays-Byrne not only doesn't have the requisite kangaroo shape as the fascist leader, he doesn't convey the requisite multitrack, well-oiled mind. The most satisfactory actor is John Walton as the neighbor who first brings Somers to Kangaroo. Walton provides openheartedness and decency, a decency beginning to be canted because

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Black Widow. A government agent (female) tracks a murderer (female). What it misses in conventional suspense it makes up in unconventional erotic undertones. (Reviewed 3/2/87)

Outrageous Fortune. Two women—Shelley Long, delicately goofy, and Bette Midler, wonderfully vulgar—involved in an enjoyably unbelievable spy chase. (3/2/87)

Swimming to Cambodia. Spalding Gray's one-man show, filmed reticently by Jonathan Demme, about Gray's small role in *The Killing Fields*. Engaging, witty, wry, residually moving in its sidewise glances at Vietnam. (3/23/87)

Working Girls. A Park Avenue brothel. The film's seemingly flat verism ultimately becomes strong protest. (3/16/87)

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he is impatient to see the world improved after what he and the other "diggers" (returned soldiers) went through. Walton is vivid as a healthy man being worn into bitterness.

Tim Burstall directed adequately, and his son, Dan, did adequate cinematography.

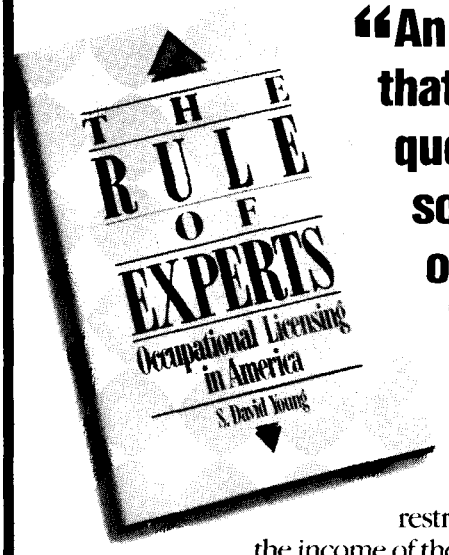
Tin Men (emphasis on the adjective) is the nickname for salesmen of aluminum siding in Baltimore in 1963. It was written and directed by Barry Levinson, who wrote and directed *Diner*, about young men in Baltimore in 1959. Four years later (in film time) Levinson gives us the same male bonding among older males and does it equally well.

He knew, of course, that this script would run the gauntlet of Mamet comparisons, and so far as those comparisons really apply, he was right to disregard them. His dialogue shows much of Mamet's uncanny ability to reshape hyperveristic speech to theatrical ends while keeping it hyperveristic; and his insight into the ways and wiles of these salesmen illuminates their lives much as Mamet opened his salesmen's lives in *Glengarry Glen Ross*. But outside those factors, a difference gapes—yawns. Mamet's play grew to its story directly out of its texture; Levinson inserts a plot into the texture of his screenplay. Everything about *Tin Men*—and it's a good deal—that has nothing to do with its plot is juicy, funny, gritty. And it's all too good for the stilted, tricky plot it surrounds.

Richard Dreyfuss and Danny DeVito are tin men working for different companies. Their cars, both Cadillacs, collide. Each blames the other; each wreaks revenges on the other. Dreyfuss even seduces DeVito's wife. The finish finds the wife newly allied, and both men out of their trade and joining up to go into a new field.

Dreyfuss has rhythm and sheen. DeVito shows his usual ways of getting hot under the choler. Barbara Hershey, still with some of the appeal she had in the 1960s, seems out of place as DeVito's wife; however, she does well as a woman who realizes that she is viewed as a chattel, resents it, but is so conditioned that she is ultimately reconciled.

Levinson is an acute director. He conducts the male dialogues with the same Harlem Globetrotters interplay that marked *Diner*. He is clever with backgrounds—the people behind the principals in streets, bars, offices. He edits well, using as hinges, between se-



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quences, close-ups of saxophones or singers in the clubs that these men frequent. And he is highly responsive to cars. Automobiles are the chief evidence that Baltimore exists: not just the Cadillacs of the salesmen but the cars parked on and moving through the streets. The last moment is a long shot of Dreyfuss and DeVito (their voices are close) driving up a street lined with parked cars as they head toward their new selling field, which will be cars.

EDWARD ROTHSTEIN ON MUSIC

Who Shot the Piano Player?

"There are probably few cities where musical amateurism is as general as it is here," wrote a Viennese correspondent for the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* in 1800. "Everybody plays, everybody learns music." Those must have been halcyon days, indeed. The words were written at the dawn of the century that has given us most of our orchestral repertory, most of our musical customs, many of our best concert halls, and most of our currently performed composers. Music was beginning to acquire the sort of status with the bourgeoisie that would forever change its style and audience. And everybody seemed to know how to play.

If a correspondent were to assess the musical scene today in our most important musical city, New York, the evaluation would have to be precisely the opposite. There are probably few cities where musical professionalism is as widespread. Music has become, to put it simply, a business. During a single week at the peak of the season, more than 150 concerts are given in the numerous grand and small halls and playing spaces around the city; the players are not young ladies fashionably toying with the latest piano sonata but polished young graduates of our finest conservatories. Everything is professional; everything is marketable. But very little is worth hearing. The situation was described as early as 1939 by Virgil Thomson:

> Enormous quantities of music are consumed but none of it means much. . . . The concert world is taken over by incompetent soloists and by overcompetent orchestral conductors who streamline the already predigested classics to a point of suavity where they go through everybody like a dose of castor oil.

Many things changed in the world between these two journalistic accounts, of 19th-century Vienna and 20th-century New York, not the least of which was the status of the amateur. Between the dominance of the amateur and that of the professional, the musical culture underwent radical transformations. It is now, as Thomson said, at the point of decadence.

It is worth sketching the broad outlines of this failure: for all the professionalism of contemporary musical life, contemporary music—itself a refuge for our most brilliant performing professionals—has never succeeded in reaching the mainstream public; for all the economic prosperity, the concert halls almost exclusively play 19th-century music; for all the polish of today's orchestral players, there is hardly an orchestra that sounds as forcefully musical as it does on recordings made more than two decades ago. For all the dedication to greater things, we repeat, over and over, those great things that we have inherited, without embracing those that we are creating; for all the expanding audiences, created and inspired by grants, recordings, promotion, and the increase in the number of concerts, musical illiteracy and lack of contact with the making of music have never been more prevalent among nonprofessionals.

The shift in importance of the amateur during the last century is crucial to this decline in the vitality of musical life. The amateur's role in this decline, though crucial, is hard to pinpoint. He is necessarily out of the public eye, a person playing for private pleasure. The amateur came to maturity, in fact, with the bourgeoisie, when the cultivation of music in the home was modeled on the practice thriving in the court; the amateur's prestige was connected to the growing prestige of his class. Here, again, the Viennese correspondent quoted above is enlightening:

> Every well-bred girl, whether she has talent or not, must learn to play the piano or to sing: first of all, it's fashionable; secondly (here the spirit of speculation comes in), it's the most convenient way for her to put herself forward attractively in society and thereby, if she is lucky, make an advantageous matrimonial alliance, particularly a moneyed one. The sons likewise must learn music: first, also, because it is the thing to do and is fashionable; secondly, because it serves them too as a recommendation in good society; and experience teaches that many a fellow (at least amongst us) has musicked himself to the side of a rich wife, or into a highly lucrative position. . . . If somebody wants to be a lawyer, he acquires a lot of acquaintances and clients through music by playing everywhere; the same is true of the aspiring physician.

The result of such aspirations was astonishing. In London, in 1750, there were no more than 12 music shops; in 1794, about 30; and in 1824, about 150. Music catalogs typically listed no more than several hundred compositions in the 1700s; by 1824, there were 10,000 publications listed in the 280-page catalog of the British publisher Boosey—and those were just foreign publications. Morsels of amateurish music were published throughout Europe and consumed voraciously. Virtually everything that was available was transcribed for the piano, ranging from the polka currently in vogue to the arias of the latest operatic hit. With the development of industry and the increase in commerce, the piano could be manufactured on a large scale, in quantities that would have been impossible for the handmade clavichords and spinets of earlier years. The bourgeois instrument par excellence, the piano brought into the home the possibility of producing the same sounds that had charmed the aristocracy.

The amateur, then, is not just someone who plays an instrument, typically the piano; rather, the amateur is one who wishes to play, who wishes to be *known* to play, and who wishes the social benefits of *being known* to play. The display of playing was also meant to be a display of skill; playing was supposed to impress. In fact, the amateur was coming into his own when music was becoming increasingly difficult—as if there were a causal relation between the complexity of finger passages and the intricate social ambitions of those whose drawing rooms were equipped with the requisite pianoforte. Extraordinary technical display, called for by Liszt and Paganini, was suited to amateur taste, if not to amateur

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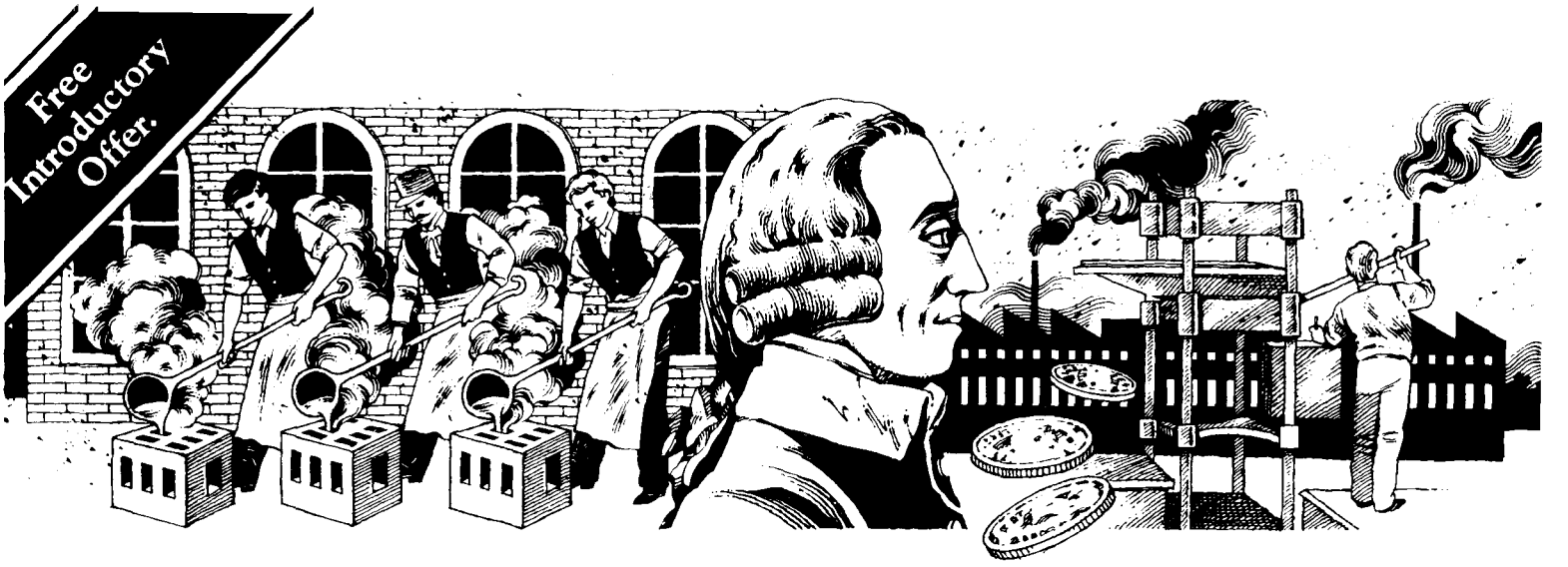

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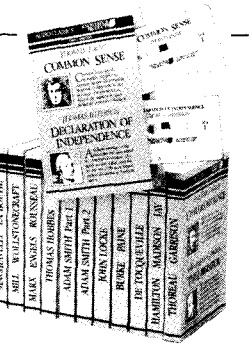

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abilities. The challenge of the music—"Can you do this?"—represented precisely the challenge that the world posed to the amateur's social ambitions. The difficulties were called "transcendental."

Even the 19th-century virtuoso was a transcendental image of the amateur. The virtuoso was far from a professional figure; he was too unpredictable, too much the individualist, rejecting the social world even as he courted it. Liszt and Paganini were acclaimed not for their professionalism, but for their mastery of the instrument and power over the audience. Theirs was the music the amateur wished to play but couldn't. The amateur's impulse to display his cultivation and skill is just a moderated, domestic version of the impulse of the virtuoso, whose entire musical existence is related to such display.

Desires for display thus led to the beginning of a public musical life, including the sale of concert tickets. The amateur who played at home was ready to pay in public. Patronage was always a sign of status, and in the 19th century its venue became the concert hall, which was effectively the court of the bourgeoisie. While amateurism was an attempt to attain public status through private activity, concerts helped to realize private ambitions in public places.

The orchestra played a distinctive role in this social drama. During the 18th century, particularly in England, upper-middle-class aspirants formed their own orchestras, meeting in assembly halls and taverns. Tickets could be sold and professionals hired for support. But the orchestra eventually became a professionalizing force. It came to require professional management at the very least, professional discipline at best. And as civic support grew, the orchestra became fully professional, closely affiliated with the city and its government. We speak of Berlin, New York, Chicago—and hardly need name the orchestras themselves. As an organization, the orchestra required structure, regularity, planning—exactly what the mercurial and temperamental virtuoso soloist appeared to disdain.

INDEED, the only way to appreciate fully the transformations wrought in 19th-century musical life by the spirit of the amateur is to step back from the century as a whole to notice the central preoccupations of its seemingly varied music. Beginning with the sonatas of Haydn and his contemporaries, music became increasingly concerned with the transformation of themes. Typically, a theme of a certain character would seem to be subject to various musical events, suffering tensions and oppositions in an almost picaresque manner, finally returning to its original form. For the listener that return would be experienced as a transformation; the theme cannot be heard in the same way again. The musical emphasis is on evolution rather than on demonstration.

As the century progressed the music became a music of *experience*. It increasingly assumed a narrative function, often with reference to specific literary works. What the listener—the amateur listener—heard in the music were musical tales, with almost novelistic preoccupations about the self. The plots of Romantic opera, beginning with the late operas of Mozart, inevitably involve the struggles of the individual within an intricate world bounded by the state, the army, society, the family.

THE MUSICAL counterpart to that newly reflective individual was the melodic line issuing from the belly and chest of the singer, linking the music directly to the listener and the listener to the tale. Melody, in a highly metaphorical sense, may even be considered a musical expression of interior and private life. When a long melodic line gracefully descends to its final tone, when it soars suddenly and flirts with a distant key, when it surprises the ear with a sudden turn—wherever it moves, it is experienced as the listener's own voice, his own feelings and dreams. The music, through melody, becomes an autobiography; its harmonic and motivic adventures a romance, an epic; the repertory a repertory of "identification."

Of course, the professional is the primary player of the great music of the last century. But this is not a music addressed to the professional (as some music is today). It is music specifically addressed to the amateur. The amateur is not concerned with the technical aspects of the music, its formal niceties and linguistic twists and turns; he is attracted to the psychological or social situations embodied in the music. This is what made the concerto so vital a musical form. The amateur saw the transcendental amateur, the virtuoso, on display, possessed by the music and possessing the audience's attention, rising out of bourgeois origins yet clearly transcending them. His nemesis was the orchestra, where the social order itself was displayed on a professional scale. Given the social nature of the themes, the concert hall and the opera house—with their grand gatherings of citizens—added resonance to the music; they were where the playing amateur found fulfillment as a listener.

BUT BY the dawn of this century, the pleasure in playing was replaced by the pleasure in listening, and the pleasure in being seen playing by the pleasure in being seen listening. The European middle class had become firmly established as the new patron and audience for serious music; the concert hall, rather than the home, had become the focus of musical life. The repertory had also solidified to comprise almost exclusively the music of the same century that had given birth to the public concert on a grand scale.

Certainly the increasing technical difficulty and complexity of music helped this process along, changing the relationship of the amateur to the art. But there were also technological reasons for the decline in the amateur's status: he had become unnecessary. By the 1920s, for example, the player piano had achieved such sophistication that the major pianists of the day were under contract to produce piano rolls for sale to the public. "Perfection without practice" was one advertising claim in 1905. By 1919, player pianos constituted more than half of the pianos manufactured in America.

The increasing popularity of recordings made even that sort of contact with an instrument superfluous. It became possible to hear music divorced from its players and the circumstances of its performance. George Bernard Shaw, at the age of 90, hailed radio for making symphonic music available to anyone at any time, noting that "my own familiarity with the orchestral classics was gained by playing arrangements of them as piano duets with my sister." The sheer pleasure of playing had to bow to the pleasure of listening without practice.

The orchestra, in the meantime, had become thoroughly professional. The Philharmonic societies had become civic institutions that themselves conferred prestige, as if the individual yearnings of the previous century were being elevated to a municipal or even a federal scale. That prestige could be conferred without labor, merely by the purchase of a ticket.

But most important, the cultural ambition that defined the amateur had been deflected. For a small number of people, it successfully blended into

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professional ambition—hence the increased enrollment and expansion of conservatories for training professional musicians. The rise of academic musical studies had much the same effect: the theory of music was something to be taught apart from the playing of music. The professionalization of musical studies grew extravagantly. Harvard gave the first American doctoral degree in music only in 1905, but by 1952 there were 231 dissertations on musical subjects being written in the United States; 1,917 dissertations were in progress in 1970.

The cultural ambitions that supported amateurism during the 19th century have also diffused in a more idiosyncratic way. Part of the amateur's initial urge to play was a desire to share the signs of cultivation established by the upper class; once that goal had become historically remote, the desire was simply to share in the rewards of success that other members of the bourgeoisie had established. The pleasures of culture were partly the pleasures of belonging, of success, of "making it." But in subsequent decades, playing an instrument became a sign of very little: the culture in question was not contemporary; proficiency in playing did not lead to proficiency in social life. Instead, to a great extent, these pleasures were claimed by the embrace of a new form of culture granted the name popular.

The new popular culture was vastly different in size and structure from the culture that saw Verdi being carried off on the shoulders of crowds following an operatic success or London readers eagerly awaiting a new installment of Dickens's latest novel. It did not make the demands of literacy that had existed earlier; it made no restrictions, and provided for the greatest number the greatest pleasure in belonging. Hence, all became lovers of sensation, their ambitions simple because so easily sated. The amateur became the consumer.

There were changes within the music as well. Much of the art music written during this century appeals not to the amateur listener—or the amateur consumer—but to the professional listener, the listener who has a trained ear, who has taken music on as a discipline, and who has chosen to discard the bourgeois aesthetic that shaped the tradition. The professional listener is the critic, the academic, the historian, the composer—anyone who depends on the development of the art for his living. And while not every professional listener has a taste for the new, few enough others do. It is primarily the professional listener who turns his attention to Elliot Carter or Pierre Boulez; the amateur listener in the concert hall remains moored to the music of the past. This new amateur listener is the direct heir of the 19th century amateur player, and is listening in precisely the same way, for identification with the music. The same narrative tales that appealed to the 19th-century amateur player appeal to the 20th-century amateur listener. He repeats, again and again, the great works of the last century, which have come to define for him what music should be.

But there is also a different focus in these repetitions: the amateur listener attends to music in a different way than the amateur player once did. Music now does its work passively. Melody—the heart of the music of "identification"—becomes fully enshrined as the dominant element of music. It may be that melody has never before been so important at the expense of harmony or the other ele-

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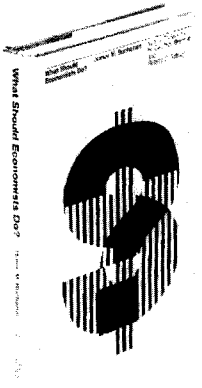

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Preface by H. Geoffrey Brennan and Robert D. Tollison

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ments of music. For the mainstream audience—that is, for the class of new amateur listeners—melody eclipses all other elements. For the large public, melody itself has become an object of longing. The great melodies of the repeated repertory of the 19th century have taken on a commercial value: they help book concert halls and sell subscription series and recordings.

The decline in musical interpretation since 1950 is partly the result of the increase in the commerce of melody. Performers began to lose the context for the singing line, to treat music as a product rather than a process. Like the bulk of contemporary musical life, our melodies are a distant image of the last century; and what is promised is never fulfilled. The cause of this situation is not simple, nor is blame to be facilely leveled against the composer, performer, listener, or manager. It represents nothing less than a wholesale transformation of cultural life.

INDEED, the new amateur listener is not at all distressed by this. He can even be quite serious and educated: he becomes a record collector, an opera fan, a Philharmonic subscriber. He listens to the 24-hour classical radio stations, surveys the feature stories in the newspapers, tunes in to "Live from Lincoln Center," and assiduously tapes broadcasts from the Met. He becomes a highly educated listener, able to discriminate among performances and styles, to argue with friends over virtues and failings of this rendition or that of one of the warhorses. He becomes the model listener for "serious" music-making. His passion is voracious; music becomes paramount. This has much to do with the powers of music itself, but the passion is also directed toward an accumulation of experience of music and toward the status conferred by such accumulation.

But rarely does even this most serious amateur listener become a player. So his experience of music always lacks the internal knowledge that performance brings—of the ways in which physical gestures are reproduced in sound—and the attentive hearing that leads to finely wrought playing. The new amateur remains a listener, and so an ardent consumer in a contemporary musical scene already flooded with commodities.

Meanwhile, the music world continues on the road to ever greater financial successes, building its audiences out of amateur listeners at best, while professional players parade across the stages, endlessly repeating the great music of the past. The concert scene of the last century had more vitality; ours has more professional polish. The concert scene then was the home of virtuosos and showmen and urgent music-making; it was the social dream of the amateur writ large. The current scene, not even an amateur could wish for.

WHAT THE POET HAD FOR BREAKFAST

Robert Lowell: Collected Prose edited by Robert Giroux

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 377 pp., $25)

Minor Monuments: Selected Essays by Howard Moss

(Ecco, 337 pp., $20)

Some sentences on Thoreau:

> His boast that he had seen the whole world in his rambles through Concord seems a morose witticism. Who but St. Anthony or a catatonic really wants to "see the world in a grain of sand"? We long for a little weakness, darkness, and fiction, for the crowded, the smut, the closeness, and malice of things.

Some sentences on novels:

> There's a certain point in every novel where one wants to know what everyone had for dinner. Tolstoy is very good on this score, James very bad. There are no bathrooms or kitchens in *The Wings of the Dove* or *The Golden Bowl* (though there is a famous omelette in *The Ambassadors*). Proust offers us a kitchen, a latrine, and a brothel.

What is it about these quotations that identifies them as the work of "writers," not "critics"? Why (to bring the matter closer to home, and leaving inegalities of talent aside) would I be unlikely to write like this? The answer, I think, lies in the familial intimacy—almost arrogance—of address that writers assume in reflecting on other writers. Could I object to the absence of kitchens in James? No, but Howard Moss could. The regard *de haut en bas* of the critic toward a poet or novelist is not the level gaze of the fellow writer. (The critic is quite capable of directing a level gaze at the work of fellow critics, on the other hand, because the job is a familiar one.) The critic devotedly takes the artwork as it is, while the fellow writer, who makes these things himself, feels free to imagine how else it might have been done, and to imagine it shaped differently—with more scope, perhaps (as Robert Lowell flings his historical world at Thoreau's transcendental Concord), or with more layers (as Moss imagines fascinating under-offices of kitchens and bathrooms).

It is the insolence of writers toward literary totems that pleases us so much in the criticism written by poets: Blake muttering against Wordsworth, "What is this fitting and fitted?"; Keats saying of Milton, "Life to him would be death to me"; Hopkins describing Browning as a man jumping up from the table with his mouth full of bread and cheese; Seamus Heaney's dry remark about Yeats's "vitreous finish." All this insolence is in fact a compliment, for to writers, their fellow writers, dead or alive, are the realest people they know. (The intensity of response writers feel has been tracked most accurately in its aspect of combat by Harold Bloom; he may feel it superfluous, because obvious, to mention the obverse of his Oedipal coin, an abject gratitude.)

With sturdy self-confidence, writers make short work of the theoretical objections that a text is not a person, that representation does not equal imitation, and so on. They know all that, and have always known it only too well, from their own fictions. Instead of taking these philosophical contradictions between life and art as barriers, they jump over them and operate, so to speak, from the other side—the world of imagination where "real" life, and the historical author, do not exist, but where Levin and Strether and the wanderer of *Walden* emphatically do, the solid and palpable

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world of the literary. Within these precincts they walk as full possessors. They possess the imaginary Chekhov of the books (more real to them than the historical Chekhov of Moscow) and the Moscow of Anna Karenina (more real to them than the Moscow of Gorbachev), and they write about that imagined man and that imagined city with the spaciousness and familiarity of intimate and prolonged acquaintance. It is this presumptuousness—of writing from the inside of the imaginary space, as a fellow inhabitant and potential reviser—that the analytic critic, in the moment of writing about books (in contrast to the moment of reading), does not quite share. For the analytic mind in the process of writing, the odes of Keats are *there*, not *here*.

Fellow novelists or fellow poets can of course write from the there, rather than from the here, too; but they prefer the here. So Lowell upbraids Thoreau as though Thoreau could hear him: "Who but St. Anthony (in his desert) or a catatonic (unable to move) would want to confine his gaze to a grain of sand?" Or Moss, entering James's house of fiction, feels free to say, "But where are the kitchens? What, no bathrooms?" As well say to Keats, listening to his nightingale, "What are you doing here alone? Find yourself a nice girl." The enormous exhilaration of reading writers' commentary arises from acquiring just that freedom to imagine rearrangements of the artworks canonized by time.

THE publication of poets' criticism is always an event. After all, it is the criticism that lasts beyond its own generation. We still read Santayana, but who now reads William Lyon Phelps? While the aim of an analytical criticism is often exhaustive (wanting to investigate everything that can be seen in the work, and to offer convincing evidence for critical hypotheses), the aim of a writer's criticism is more likely to be that of characterizing or sketching, with exemplary vividness, the general nature of a work. "I'm very anxious in criticism," Lowell said in an interview reprinted here, "not to do the standard analytical essay. I'd like my essay to be much sloppier and more intuitive." Modesty perhaps dictated the word "sloppier"; Lowell meant, I think, something like "shaggier." The shagginess of poets' writing appears in its sudden jumps of lexical register, caused chiefly by its

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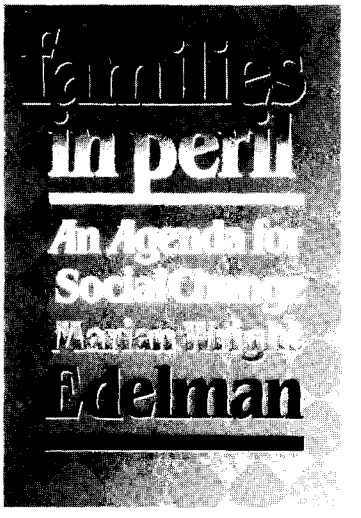

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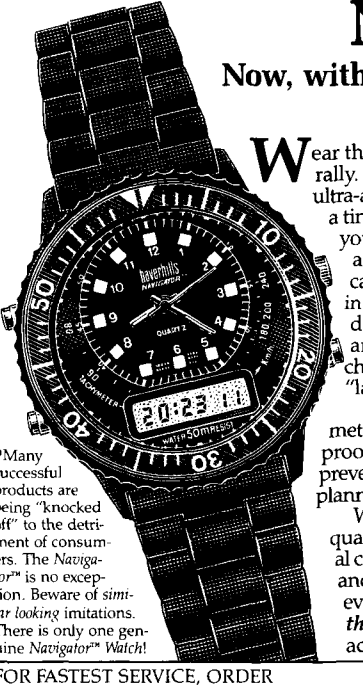

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sprouting of metaphor.

Some samples of metaphorical writing from Lowell:

He and Berryman "both came out clinging to spars, enough floating matter to save us, though faithless."

On *The Waste Land*: "In the broken household of *The Waste Land*, Dido is more *varium et mutabile* than the immobile Aeneas."

On Dickinson: "The ladder she climbed points to godless eternity; its rungs were carved from Scripture."

On the plethora of essays on James: "Interpretation has lost the oil of novelty."

On Longfellow: "Tennyson without gin."

The analytic critic feels a wistful (and intermittently petulant) relation to all this clever, laughing energy. "If only," she sometimes muses, "I could write in my essay on Longfellow, 'Tennyson without gin'—or remark, in my headnote on Thoreau, that nobody but a catatonic wants to stare at sand grains." But she feels on reflection that it wouldn't be . . . what?—just? true? complete? And the comprehensive aim, the compulsion to offer evidence, felt by analytic criticism reproves the shorthand of metaphor or the friskiness of the poet's gibe.

STILL, IT IS the gibes—and the praises—of the poets that remain memorable, because metaphorical. Here are some metaphorical moments from Moss:

On Elizabeth Bowen: "Words are the drunken part of her otherwise sober books."

On Elizabeth Bishop: "We always feel that more slides have been taken away than are going to be projected."

On *The Ship of Fools*: "The seemingly safe bourgeois marriages—of solid Germans, of stolid Swiss—are secret hand-to-hand combats."

On Proust: "He dissected snobbery down to its ultimate fishbone."

And yet metaphor is not the poet's only, or even chief, charm in criticism. Moss, for instance, is more likely to employ an aphorism than a metaphor:

"[Time] has its own sliding scale—the necessary, the bearable, the desperate."

"Emotional illness has never found a better front than ethical smugness."

"Nothing binds people closer together than mutual unhappiness."

"Chekhov's plays suffer from classlessness in translation."

"The fiction writer is dominated by the clock and the poet by the metronome."

MOSS'S ESSAYS—most of them on prose or plays—possess, in addition to wit, an incomparable deftness in their economical sketches of what a Chekhov play or a Welty novel are like in the reading. They are unobtrusively aesthetic in their discreet play of light and shade, balancing facts and impressions. (Lowell, who is more likely to be writing on poets, is not called on to sketch plots, and relies rather on deadly accurate descriptions of poetic contour and tone.) While the Lowell volume contains interviews and memoirs as well as essays (on Frost, Ford, Stevens, Williams, Eliot, Warren, Berryman, and others, all of them worth discussion), Moss's collection is almost entirely one of criticism (though it contains a brilliant memoir of Jean Stafford).

Looking at Moss's choices as a critic, it is apparent that he prefers, on the whole, writers who exhibit delicacy as well as strength—Chekhov, Proust, Flaubert, James, Auden, Bishop, Mansfield. He understands writing by women—Bishop, Welty, Bowen, Porter, Rhys. He writes often about homosexuals—Proust, Whitman, Cavafy, Auden, Bishop, James Schuyler. He seems as much at home in plays and novels as in the world of poetry, where he has made his own secure reputation. Unlike most poets, he extends his psychological acuteness beyond the bounds of the private psyche into the conflicts of the social world; a shrewd and tolerant knowledge of men and women lies behind the *pensées* that illuminate his pages.

Moss's great gift as a critic is his temperament, at once intense and dispassionate. It is no accident that his deepest affinities seem to lie with Chekhov, in whom sympathy and irony combine to attain a rare equilibrium between generosity and clarity. Of one of Rhys's works, Moss writes, "[It is] the most harrowing of the novels"; but even as he has been harrowed, he has been able to watch ironically as well, and he remarks coolly about Rhys's heroines, "When the lovers run out, the one-night stand takes their place." Moving from the justice of sympathy to the justice of observation, Moss is a critic to be trusted—limpid, accurate, tempered. Poets will want to read his essay "The First Line," a meditation of great charm on what the first lines of poems intimate, promise, and deliver.

THE PARTS of Lowell's book that will be read with most interest are the hitherto unpublished memoirs "Antebellum Boston" and "Near the Unbalanced Aquarium," and the long unpublished essay on American poets, "New England and Further." The memoirs are written in the relentless style of "91 Revere Street"—a style both naturalistic and surreal, in which facts are so crushed against each other in a vise of personal significance that they are, so to speak, squashed out of their more recognizable daily shape. One example must suffice. The Lowells are living in Philadelphia, and the child Robert Lowell succeeds in persuading a spinster relative to give him the "cracked ivory elephant, the color of jaundice and no bigger than a man's molar" that she always wears around her neck on a black cord:

> I wanted the elephant not only as proof of devotion but greedily for itself, because it was small, heavy, precious, useless—the heart that Martha wore on her sleeve as well as the absurd animal around her neck. . . . [He is given the spinster's treasure.] I tapped the ivory on my teeth as though it were a piece of rock candy. And then it went down. Doctors came. Mother kept saying with Gargantuan suavity, "Bobby has swallowed an elephant." Then it was unmentionably ascertained that the ivory elephant had come out in my chamber pot. I was told it was broken into three pieces so that I couldn't see it again. And that was the sly, stupid end of a little trinket cherished by a foolish woman and by me.

A writer of memoirs is one sufficiently cruel to tell the truth, one who can render the trivial significant. Lowell's way is to place the chamber pot, the Gargantuan suavity of his mother, the jaundiced molar of ivory, and his own primitive acquisitiveness and sensuality into an improbable relation, then squeeze them into the iron bars of his framing commiserating irony.

At the end of the painful and self-exposing memoir "Near the Unbalanced Aquarium" (composed during Lowell's confinement in Payne-Whitney after his mother's death, and cannibalized for several poems in *Life Studies*), Lowell says, "I am writing my autobiography literally to 'pass the time.' I almost doubt if the time would pass at all otherwise. However, I also hope the result will supply me with—" "With what?" we wonder.

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Alone, both parents dead, in a hospital for the insane, what does the poet hope his writing will give him? The answer, unexpected and characteristically metaphorical, is twofold: "swaddling clothes" (the embrace, maternal and narcissistic at once, of writing) and "a sort of immense bandage of grace and ambergris for my hurt nerves" (writing's Melvillean and godlike capacity to soothe and forgive). The odd thing about authentic personal writing, of which there is so much in this powerful book, is that it acts as embrace and ambergris for the rest of us as well.

Lowell's tour de force in the essay "New England and Further" is to imagine himself successively into the beings of Cotton Mather, Franklin, Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Lincoln, James Russell Lowell, Longfellow, Melville, Parkman, Motley, Henry James, Henry Adams, Dickinson, Santayana, Frost, Stevens, and Eliot. They all appear looking recognizably Lowellesque in this brief series of sketches, and the effect is somewhat like that of *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. But the essay is surely the most personal and original set of remarks on our canonical writers since Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*. And we end by knowing Lowell himself much better through these, his alter egos.

Many modern poets, excellent ones, have shown no capacity for, or interest in, the writing of critical prose: one thinks of Bishop, for instance. Others have been brilliant at it—Eliot, Jarrell. Others are capable without being brilliant—but even there, one is glad to have the reflections of any idiosyncratic, illuminating, and unrepeatable mind. To have two more books added to the shelf of living prose by poets is to augment a store that is always small, but of inestimable value.

HELEN VENDLER

Helen Vendler is Kenan Professor of English at Harvard. She is the author of books on Yeats, Stevens, Herbert, and Keats, and has recently edited *The Harvard Book of Contemporary American Poetry* (Harvard University Press).

DO NOT GO SOBER

The Old Devils
by Kingsley Amis

(Summit Books, 294 pp., $16.95)

> Perhaps being old is having lighted rooms
> Inside your head, and people in them,
> acting.
> —Philip Larkin, "The Old Fools"

Kingsley Amis's *The Old Devils* is so dense with booze that the book seems sunken, subaquatic, its retired Welsh sots trying to remain standing in an aquarium stocked with gin and drifting hunks of scenery. They don't always succeed. "Siân Smith fell down on her way out but soon got up again and made it into the hall." Even sitting can be a trial. "There came a noise that began rather like a fart of heroic proportions but soon proved to be made by the exhaustive ripping of the canvas seat of Peter's chair under his buttocks." These pratfalls are set within a movieish swirl of clinking bottles, lingering smoke, and confidential asides ("I never realized how much he drank till the night he came home sober. A revelation, it was"). By morning, Amis's wasted wrecks feel as if heavy furniture has been pushed around in their heads. Everyone recalls the hangover in *Lucky Jim* ("His mouth had been used as a latrine by some small creature of the night, and then as its mausoleum"), and a casualty here wakes up taking similar inventory ("He felt as if about two-thirds of his head had recently been sliced off and his heart seemed to be beating somewhere in his stomach, but otherwise he was fine . . ."). Another dreams amorously of Mrs. Thatcher, who tells him that "without him her life would be a mere shell, an empty husk." Teenagers who crave kicks might envy the lifestyle of these aimless ruins, with their pensions and pills. This crew can get oiled until their eyeballs float and there's nobody around to tell them, "Mind your elders." They *are* the elders. Nearly everyone they had to mind is kaput.

Not that they're merry sods, waving mugs in time to songs at ye olde alehouse. Their principal place of congregation is an adjunct room to a pub called the Bible, once home for a squash club and decorated now with old photos nobody's bothered to take down and a couple of leftover ashtrays. Its defunct air suits its male regulars (the wives tipple at home), themselves smugly past-it. It's a place where men go to pretend. "Queers aside," thinks Alun, a TV smoothie who has returned to Wales after a posh career in London, "men above twenty-five or so were never drunk however pissed they might be." Cold air keeps creeping in on this clique, bringing 'em back to personal history, inescapable thoughts, that old sow mortality. Booze as they might, Amis's ornery types are sandbagged in being. But what being! *Ending Up*, an earlier Amis tale of age and collapse, was an elaborate mousetrap of black humor snapping the spindly necks of its set-up cast. *Stanley and the Women*, trying so hard to provoke, was little more than a cranky fit—phlegm passing itself off as bile. But *The Old Devils* has a tough honest crust and scuttling sideways humor. Nowhere in it does Amis attempt shapely sentences or lyrical, dying falls. His is an aesthetic of the antibeautiful. The book's astringency feels just right. It's the best novel on the delinquencies of the old since Muriel Spark's *Memento Mori*.

The sheer cussed readability of *The Old Devils* is a constant reward. Bam, right from the start Amis tunes in to the morning chat of one of his couples as if it were a long-running radio show. Malcolm, the male half of this team, smokes a single cigarette in the morning to get his insides going. He doesn't hold with the laxatives that his wife, Gwen, recommends. "He thought it a bit thick for a man not to be able to win an argument about his own insides, even one with his wife." Along with Malcolm and Gwen, the couples treading time in *The Old Devils* are Alun and Rhiannon, Charlie and Sophie, Garth and Angharad, Percy and Dorothy, Peter and Muriel. There's also a young pair consisting of William (son of Peter and Muriel) and Rosemary (daughter of Alun and Rhiannon), whose wedding takes up the novel's least riveting chapter. I've provided a line-up because a number of reviewers in England, where the novel won the Booker Prize, have complained about not being able to tell the players without a scorecard. P. J. Kavanagh in the *Spectator*: "Somehow it became almost

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Russian in its confusing welter of Christian names, it was difficult to remember who was speaking, or who was married to whom." Comments like Kavanagh's shouldn't deter. At a time when so many novels are vehicles for a single vote (*Edisto*, *The Counterlife*, *Tough Guys Don't Dance*, whatever), Amis provides a distinct party mix. He moves a small troupe of actors across the page, and their voices never fritz through crosswiring, as in George V. Higgins's lowlife broadcasts. They have their own individual swing. Take, for instance, Alun's suave solo on one of the book's favorite bogus themes, The Spirit of Wales.

Asked what it is like to be back north, he replies, "Many things grave and gay and multicolored but one above all: I'm coming home. That short rich resounding word means one simple single thing to a Welshman such as I, born and bred in this land of river and hill. And that thing, that miraculous thing is—Wales." This parody of Dylan Thomas at his most mellifluous and fruity (a Dylan Thomas figure named Brydan hovers over *The Old Devils* like a plump, puking cherub) is almost too easy, and Amis is shrewd enough not to overdo it. He hits his relaxed stride in more extended sessions, like this man-to-man talk between Malcolm and Alun on the topic of Malcolm's Shortcomings:

> "You're the feeblest creature God ever put breath into," said Alun. "Why any woman should have spent thirty-three minutes married to you, let alone thirty-three years, defies comprehension. You've no idea in the world of what pleases a woman: in other words"—he seemed to be choosing these with care—"you're not only hopeless as an organizer of life in general, you're a crashingly boring companion into the bargain and needless to say, er, perennially deficient in the bedroom. Correct?"
>
> "That about sums me up. Oh, I'm also cut off."
>
> "Cut off?"
>
> "Cut off from real people in my own little pathetic fantasy world of dilettante Welshness, medievalism and poetry." Malcolm drained his glass.
>
> "*Poetry?* You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a great big hulking fellow like you . . . ."

Mimicry has always been one of Amis's specialties, vocal and facial. The poet Philip Larkin recounted that at Oxford Amis had a rich repertoire of riffs. "Kingsley's masterpiece, which was so demanding I heard him do it only twice, involved three subalterns, a Glaswegian driver and jeep breaking down and refusing to restart somewhere in Germany. Both times I became incapable with laughter." It was Larkin who encouraged Amis to put more faces into *Lucky Jim*. (Larkin himself seems to be making faces in *The Old Devils*. Echoes abound, from a rephrasing of one of his most famous lines—"Life is first boredom, then fear" becomes "Life is first boredom, then more boredom"—to a replay of their shared love for old jazz: "Through a roaring fuzz of needle-damage the sounds of 'Cakewalkin' Babies' emerged.")

The mimicry that Larkin admired was and is more than imitation. Amis has a brilliant handle on how theatrical bits of business infiltrate daily life until they become casual shtick. " 'Rhiannon Rhys, as she was when I first met her,' said Malcolm fluently, raising himself in the seat like a panelist answering a question from the audience . . . ." When Amis shows his couples in the privacy of their own homes, it's like taking a peek backstage. Alun's snowy mane, for example: "Most of his friends were pretty sure that he improved on nature in this department as in others; not many of them would have guessed that Rhiannon put the whitener on for him while they giggled and had drinks." (Alun and Rhiannon are this book's Lunt and Fontanne.) Amis is also apt on how clothes become costume. Meeting Rhiannon for a day-trip, Malcolm climbs out of the car wearing "a hacking jacket whose dark red, green fawn checks . . . were too large by an incredibly small amount." From that foxy detail alone we know that Malcolm foolishly fancies himself a rakish blade. (Malcolm's peaked cap also gives Rhiannon pause.) Amis has always been marvelous on the subtle gradations of the slightly off.

For Amis, slightly off isn't a bad state to be in, considering the surrounding mess. Happiness he locates at the margins, away from the madding crowd and media megahype. Like Larkin (with whom he shares a distrust of the transcendent sublime—e.g., his poem "Against Romanticism"), he sees the century choking on its own unrest and coughing up weeds. No Shelleys await to lift the planet high. Useful purpose is petering out, not only in the old devils but in

Two Poems

Lines For A Simple Computer To Sort Out

Like phrases in a song
Which unexpectedly
Return before too long

Like an alarming gong
Rung in a quiet sea,
Like phrases in a song

Which will always belong
To where they carefully
Return before too long

Settling in among
The verbs of what will be,
Like phrases in a song

Re-echoing, half-wrong
Half-right (so even we
Return before too long

To what we were) a throng
Of bits we call memory
Like phrases in a song
Return before too long.

Elemental Colloquy

She lay in the spill of street-lamp light,
Mumbling in some dream. He heard:
"*Did they call you, too, about your lives?*"
She paused, and then as if something hurt:
"*They were all stuck together with glue.*" And he:
"The lives?" "*They said my feathers would get Better,*" she said, suffused with the heat
Of her sleep, into which he asked again
(Not caring who *they* were, but versed
In dreams where persons mean less than place),
Taking her back to her opening verb:
"Where were you when they called?" She explained
Enough with her answer to make him laugh—
"*In the water*"—which washed her up on land.

JOHN HOLLANDER

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Wales, the world. The brawny flex of the industrial age is finished:

> Now, where once ships by the dozen had lain, bringing timber, ores, pig-iron, fetching coal, coke, spelter, there was just the harbor dredger, looking as if it had not yet been out that year, and a single dirty little freighter flying the blue, white and red of Yugoslavia.

And in the absence of trade and enterprise, what's left? Tourism, mostly—a quaint makeover of the country so that it's acceptably chichi for cosmos on holiday and locals itching for a little flash. As Charlie puts it neatly, "Everywhere's trendy now unless it's actually starving." Equally ersatz is the attempt to bottle the ruddy flavor of Wales into such a self-conscious package that the place becomes more a slick site for a TV series than a lived-in heap of associations.

But behind the racy promise of chic or the peeling bark of antiquity, something intangibly real remains. "Anyway, it was Wales all right," thinks Rhiannon when she arrives by train:

> There was no obvious giveaway, like road-signs in two languages or closed-down factories, but something was there, an extra greenness in the grass, a softness in the light, something that was very like England and yet not England at all, more a matter of feeling than seeing but not just feeling, something run-down and sad but simpler and freer than England all the same.

In passages this gently ruminative, Amis reaches a level of response that he hasn't attained since *Take a Girl Like You*. And near the end of the novel there's an episode involving one character's fear of the dark that has a zero-pathos purity of fellow feeling.

Kingsley Amis being something of an old devil himself (asked what he was going to spend his prize money on, he replied, "Booze, of course"), it's hardly surprising that the book has an air of complicity. What is surprising is that the air is so cool and clear. Despite the age of its cast, *The Old Devils* doesn't tiptoe near the sunset waters of *On Golden Pond* to engage in gallant reverie. Its rambling yet pointed dialogue, snapshots of decay, and noisy misdemeanors are very much in the present tense. Amis's old devils don't look backward, to youth, or forward, to death, but just far enough ahead to get through the livelong day. Each morning becomes a matter of getting the machinery going. Few novels contain this much crowded sensation. Fewer still show such fidgety control of their funny-sad effects. Like Alun, Amis has a stay-awake mind that sees through muck and stupor. Sobriety sits in his forehead like a Cyclopean eye, always open for business. Business here is brisk.

JAMES WOLCOTT

James Wolcott writes regularly for *Texas Monthly* and *Vanity Fair*.

TWINKIES

"And So It Goes": Adventures in Television
by Linda Ellerbee

(Putnam's, 255 pp., $16.95)

Good Morning, I'm Joan Lunden
by Joan Lunden with Ardy Friedberg

(Putnam's, 254 pp., $17.95)

Except for almost anything Andy Rooney says or does, nothing on television makes me more homicidal than Linda Ellerbee saying "And so it goes." This is not a widely shared opinion. Reviews of Ellerbee have almost invariably been reverent. According to a citation from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, "NBC News Overnight," the wee-hours program that made her a cult figure among insomniacs, was "possibly the best-written and most intelligent news program ever." Similar encomiums have attended Ellerbee's migration into the land of the largely awake. Her two current outlets on ABC—a weekly segment on "Good Morning America" and an hour-long nostalgia newsreel called "Our World"—have been praised enthusiastically. The near consensus among smart people is that if television were made by smart people for smart people, instead of by idiots for morons, we'd see even more of Linda Ellerbee than we already do.

This, to me, is not a happy prospect. Like virtually everyone else, I slept through most of the brief run that "Overnight" enjoyed, but when I did see the show it struck me as a sloppy, underedited hash. Worse, the program's self-satisfaction was palpable. The flavor of Ellerbee's damn-I'm-good narration, now resurrected in somewhat milder form in her "T.G.I.F." segments on "Good Morning America," is well conveyed by this snippet from her book:

> Has the [television news] business progressed enough to allow an aging female who believes in unicorns, truth, justice, rock 'n' roll and the American way—not necessarily in that order—to stay on the air? Not too long ago I happened to hear a woman who anchors a local newscast in New York referred to as a "young Linda Ellerbee." Well, I'm glad someone is. Right now, forty-one seems a good fit, and although it may sound pompous, I didn't get to be forty-one in this job without being good at it—and it took getting to be forty-one to be able to say that I am good at what I do and I know it.

According to her fans, Ellerbee is remarkable primarily for what she isn't: blond, pretty, thin, stupid. With unstyled brown hair, oversized glasses, shapeless clothes, and a chain-smoker's rasp, she is indeed the antithesis of the standard-issue dyed-blond female correspondent. Ellerbee refers to her comelier, dumber colleagues as "Twinkies." She, in contrast, wears sneakers and gains weight.

The matter of physical appearance comes up repeatedly in *"And So It Goes."* Ellerbee mocks the network blondes, presumably hired for their beauty rather than their brains. But in a curious way she too has built her career on her appearance. Her tubby outline has achieved its own celebrity. According to a tally in *Spy* magazine, her weight was mentioned as often as Paul Newman in Liz Smith's gossip column in the *New York Daily News* last September (four times each). The November 1986 issue of *Ms.* led off with Ellerbee's reflections on "Why I Look the Way I Do." She fusses over her plainness as avidly as the twinkiest Twinkie fusses over her mascara. In her book she returns again and again to the sneakers, to the sweaters, to the blue jeans. One almost begins to wonder, Is

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there no more to this correspondent than shabby clothes and a weight problem?

All the talk about Ellerbee's looks, much of it self-generated, obscures two things that she properly identifies as more important: her writing ability and her intelligence. Both are taken as givens. Just as Kate Jackson, plainer of face and smaller of bosom than Farrah Fawcett, was always the "smart" Angel on "Charlie's Angels," Ellerbee is presumed on the basis of her waistline to be a brain. But in fact there are markedly few signs of intelligent life in Ellerbee's broadcast performances. What one finds instead is an unremitting smugness, a sort of rapture of the shallow. Ellerbee's standard script is a pastiche of truisms and conventional wisdom (circa 1968) delivered with eyebrows slightly arched.

Her trademark exit line is a case in point. Pinched from Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, where it appeared with equally annoying frequency, though without the initial conjunction, "And so it goes" is the cliché with which she responds to the clichés that constitute her worldview. Congress is a circus, politicians are clowns, doctors and lawyers are thieves, reporters are thieves and deadbeats, life is irrational, television is unreal. These weary chestnuts are offered as startling insights into the culture. And then, high irony: "And so it goes." All of this is no dumber than what one is accustomed to seeing on television. But it is every bit as dumb. Why, then, is Ellerbee hailed as TV news's smart Angel?

Her reputation as a writer is just as hard to fathom. *"And So It Goes"* is unfocused and disorganized. Too many of the sentences are too short. Too many of the rest are too long: "What they were, were politicians running for office, and a reporter who continued to add honorifics to their names gave those men an edge over men without titles, or men whose titles were lesser ones—even if it was a tradition to do it." She has a tiresome preference for words like "jackass," "balls," and "buttnaked," as well as a penchant for sophomoric imagery: "While it may be true that in a septic tank the really big chunks always rise to the top, it's also true that the smaller pieces clog the system, too."

Ellerbee's writing for broadcast is less profane, but no more skillful. "Our World" quickly exhausted my tolerance for both the present tense and the first person plural ("When we remember a time, we remember moments . . ."). Each segment is built around file footage from a brief span of recent history. The show's "writing" consists of fatuous pop sociology, and some of the most improbable transitions ever attempted on prime time:

> All of a sudden, in the spring of 1970, here are the Temptations singing about revolution instead of romance. So why should that be less confusing than Glen Campbell singing about little girls when females are demanding rights as women—especially when neither is quite as shocking as Janis Joplin singing anything at all? . . . At first it might seem that "future shock" is just another way to say "generation gap." But if that is the case, why then is Madison Avenue trying to sell skirts to men?

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Old film and videotape have powerful sentimental appeal, of course; still, the program has no heft. In a segment last fall, Ellerbee and co-host Ray Gandolf (a former sports reporter who has apparently shed his own four-word sign-off, "Have a good life") helped convey the mood of the spring of 1954 by delivering part of their commentary from behind TV dinners. "Our World" bills itself as a production of ABC News, but the show could as easily be the work of Dick Clark and Ed McMahon.

At one point in her book, Ellerbee offers a list of pretty blondes on television who are nonetheless not Twinkies: Lesley Stahl, Mary Alice Williams, Lynn Sherr, Sylvia Chase, Diane Sawyer, and Jane Pauley. Missing—conspicuously?—from this short register is Joan Lunden, now Ellerbee's on-air superior at "Good Morning America." As luck would have it, Lunden also has written a book. Both volumes are published by the same house, and both (according to my inexact analysis) devote the same fraction of their content to clothes, weight, makeup, and hair. Lunden's book is a page shorter and a dollar more expensive. Which is the better buy?

Much to my surprise, Lunden's book was fairly enjoyable. Although there is much in it that might have been left out ("I stack them in the order that I put them on, that is, panties on top, then bra, skirt or pants, some kind of casual shirt or sweater, socks and shoes"), there is also a good deal that is of interest. Lunden and her co-author have a better feel for narrative than Ellerbee does, and Lunden's life story is genuinely interesting, even a little inspiring. She doesn't exactly blow the lid off network television, but she gives a more knowing peek behind the scenes than Ellerbee does. And nowhere in her

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book does she tell a tedious joke involving the government, the public, and the verb "screw"—something Ellerbee does twice.

Lunden came to television, as Ellerbee did, by accident. (Ellerbee was offered a job in TV after being fired by the Associated Press for inadvertently transmitting an unguarded personal letter over the news wire.) After knocking around in Mexico and elsewhere during the late '60s and early '70s, Lunden, at the age of 23, opened the Joni Lisa Charm and Modeling School of Sacramento. Someone from a local TV station dropped by one day in search of a hand model. "Joni Lisa" (the name on her birth certificate is Joan Elise Blunden) took the assignment herself. Shortly afterward she was persuaded to try out for the evening news. She was immediately offered two jobs, one as a consumer reporter and one as an apprentice weatherperson. She took the latter. An astonishing three years later she was ably co-hosting "Good Morning America" with David Hartman, the man with the biggest, whitest teeth in network television. (Lunden captures Hartman perfectly in a single sentence: "I'd seen him respond with a genuine sense of wonder to some of the least interesting people in the world.")

Lunden's path to the top was alternately cleared and blockaded by her good looks. As television executives in the early '70s awakened to the notion that a woman might read from a TelePrompTer as well as a man, they plucked pretty faces from out of nowhere and put them in front of the camera. Such jobs were often short-lived. The executives viewed their blondes as commodities, and their response to a dip in the ratings was often to "fire the girl." Lunden, however, was a quick study. She survived and flourished by learning her job from the top down.

Not long after her debut in Sacramento, Lunden was offered a plum position at ABC's New York affiliate, which was trying to extend its appeal into the WASP suburbs. She jumped at the opportunity, but found herself frosted out by a newsroom full of parochial Gothamites who called her Barbie and offered next to no help as she struggled to learn a brand-new job in a brand-new city. But Lunden turned out to be tougher than the newsroom assumed. Relying on camera crews to tell her what her colleagues would not (including the function of camera crews), she transformed herself virtually overnight from a gee-whiz California girl into a street-smart New York reporter. Her success did not warm the chilly hearts of her coworkers. Indeed, office relations were further strained when Lunden's segments began to attract the attention of the network.

As might be expected, Lunden's and Ellerbee's books both contain many tales of encounters with Neanderthal-like male executives. Lunden's dumb-man stories are better. (For one thing, she usually names names.) Ellerbee's if-they-tell-me-to-lose-weight-I'll-gain-weight attitude about almost everything quickly becomes tiring. When the Neanderthals cross her, she threatens to hold her breath until she turns blue. Lunden is shrewder at picking her fights and more effective at fighting them.

Lunden's wickedest story has to do with one Jon Kelly, owner of the Sacramento station where she got her start. "You'll never make it, you know, because you don't have the talent," he told her, in front of her mother, as she went off to audition at WABC. "And even if you do get the job, you'll be back here in six months on your knees, begging for your old job back." Several years later, nationally known from "Good Morning America," Lunden was having lunch at a Sacramento restaurant with her mother and a few others. Spotting Kelly across the room with a table of salesmen and advertisers, she crawled up behind him and begged, "Oh, Mr. Kelly, you told me when I left Sacramento that in six months I'd be back on my knees begging for my old job. Here I am. Can I please have it back, please?"

Her book notwithstanding, Lunden's show is awfully slow going. Watching any of the three morning news programs requires a feeling of dopey well-being that I can usually achieve only in hotels. But the morning shows don't pretend to be more than they are. "Our World" is worse in part because it thinks it's better. That it passes for a smart news program is evidence that TV has made us dumber than we think.

DAVID OWEN

David Owen is a contributing editor to the *Atlantic*.

HELLO TO ALL THAT

Robert Graves: The Assault Heroic 1895-1926 by Richard Perceval Graves

(Elisabeth Sifton Books/Viking, 387 pp., $24.95)

On Armistice Day 1985, Ted Hughes, doing his job as England's poet laureate, unveiled a plaque in Westminster Abbey commemorating the poets of the First World War. All of the illustrious dead were on it: Sassoon, Owen, Blunden, Brooke, Grenfell, Edward Thomas. But one name was carved there that shouldn't have been: the name of Robert Graves. Not that Graves wasn't illustrious enough; most readers of poetry would agree that he was the best poet of the lot. But he wasn't yet dead. He survived his memorializing by a little more than three weeks, and then died quietly in Majorca, 90 years old and the last of the War Poets.

It was not the first time that Graves's death had been too hastily assumed. In July 1916, his family was notified that he had died of wounds suffered in the Battle of the Somme, and he had the peculiar experience of reading a notice of his own death in the *Times* as he lay recuperating in a London hospital. Graves saw that death as in some sense actual; he wrote a poem about it, shortly after the event, that begins, "But I *was* dead, an hour or more," and later on he wrote a verse letter to his friend Siegfried Sassoon in which he took the death as a reality that raised a question of identity: If he had died, then who *was* he?

Dying may have made that question of identity especially puzzling for Graves, but it was a question that he shared with his generation. They had grown up in one world, had fought for four years in another, and had returned, still young, to yet another. Those three worlds were not simply different; they were radically discontinuous—or so they seemed to the generation that had lived through them. For it is one of the dis-

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tinctive features of Western cultural history that it seemed to fracture at 1914, and again at the war's end, leaving two gaps in history, two points at which the relevance of the past seemed disproved by present reality. If the war occurred, then the values of the Edwardian world were lies. If the peace was negotiated on the terms determined at Versailles, then the values for which the war had been fought were lies, too. Twice in a decade society seemed compelled to deny its own past, and to begin again.

One of the classic accounts of those three worlds and their disjunctions is Graves's *Goodbye To All That* (1929). It is usually thought of as a war book, and certainly it is one of the best accounts of what it was like to be a young officer in the trenches during the 1914-18 war. But it is more than that; it is also the story of Graves's lives in those other worlds—the life that a middle-class public-school boy led in the secure years before the war, and the life that a penniless young ex-soldier led in the years after. These lives tell us what most other war books don't: the sort of world that young men like Graves left to go to war, and the sort of world they came back to. Reading about them, we begin to understand that strange mood of exaltation and sacrifice that so many young Englishmen shared in 1914, and the mood of alienation and disaffection that darkened the postwar years. We see, in one life, the opening of those gaps in history.

Graves explained in the first paragraph of his autobiography what the odd title meant:

> The objects of this autobiography, written at the age of thirty-three, are simple enough: an opportunity for a formal goodbye to you and to you and to you and to me and to all that; forgetfulness, because once all this has been settled in my mind and written down and published it need never be thought about again; money.

This is partly an expression of that general rejection of the past that marks the postwar period—goodbye to *all* that, the Edwardian comforts and the postwar confusions as well as the war itself. But it also suggests another motive that Graves shared with many other ex-soldiers at that time, a decade after the war's end: the impulse to exorcise the war by mythologizing it. If you could turn your war into a story, you might quiet its uproar, might give it some order, perhaps even some significance. Then maybe you could turn away from it and get on with life. Graves wrote his war book so that he could stop writing about war.

At roughly the same time, Graves was saying goodbye to his past in another way. He put together his first collected poems in the late '20s, and for that volume he gathered together his best war poems, which he grouped in a section headed "War: 1915-1919." Then he forgot about them. Not a single war poem appears in any of his many subsequent collections—only one memory poem, the melancholy "Recalling War." It was as though Graves had decided that the man who wrote those poems was the Captain Graves who had been declared dead on the Somme. It's *that* Graves who is commemorated on the Abbey plaque. The other one, the one who survived, had moved on, to be a different and better poet.

It would be good if the complete works of Captain Graves could be restored to the canon. They amount to nearly 50 war poems, including some very strong ones—"A Dead Boche," "Goliath and David," "Corporal Stare" are examples—that have as good a claim to express the mood of the western front as the poems of Owen and Sassoon have. They are only a small part of the many poems that have dropped out of sight over the years, as Graves revised edition after edition of his *Collected Poems*, always adding, but always subtracting too. Perhaps now that Graves is dead, his publishers will acknowledge that they have a major modern poet in their care, and will issue a truly complete, carefully edited edition of his poems. That book will be a big, impressive volume, the proper measure of a talent that emerged early and went on and on, in spite even of a death.

GRAVES'S NEPHEW, Richard Perceval Graves, has taken the same period that *Goodbye* covers—the first three decades of Graves's life—as the span of the first volume of his biography. A foolhardy decision, one might say, seeming to put his book into competition with an acknowledged classic among modern memoirs. But though R. P. (as I shall henceforth call him) deals with "all that," he does so in a different way, and in quite different proportions, reducing the extent of the war narrative (a story that Uncle Robert told as well as anyone could) and giving more attention to the years before and after. The result is a fuller, more densely populated account of Graves's first three worlds than *Goodbye* offers—a less exciting book, but a continuously interesting one.

The first Graves world, in this telling, is like a Victorian novel: the fussy, elderly father, the pious mother, the siblings with their rivalries and problems, the endless uncles and cousins, the family holidays and outings. And behind all that the preoccupation with family status and money, the relentless pressure to be dutiful and moral, and the consequent feelings of guilt and failure. Central to this life, here as in *Goodbye*, is Graves's experience of public school. Pre-war Charterhouse was probably no worse than any other school, but it sounds dire enough, with its strict hierarchy of power, its bullies and games-playing heroes, and its atmosphere of homoerotic yearnings and shame. It was a complete, authoritarian world-without-women, and it was transposed, virtually intact, to that other womanless world, the western front,

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when the war began—a process that explains much about the war, and about its poetry.

Graves went directly from one world into the next, from school into the army. He left Charterhouse on July 28, 1914, four days after his 19th birthday, and three weeks later he was an officer in the Royal Welch Fusiliers. He served through the war, was wounded, mentioned in dispatches, and promoted. It wasn't a distinguished career—he didn't get the medals that Sassoon and Owen did—but it was a decent one. He went four times to France, until he was told that he was no longer physically fit for combat and was sent back to England to finish out the war.

One tends to assume that all war poets hated and opposed the war. The truth is more complicated than that. Graves joined up in the first place because "France is the only place for a gentleman now," but he took to the life, and two years and two tours of duty later he was describing himself as "a sound militarist in action however much of a pacifist in thought." When his friend and fellow Fusilier Sassoon got into trouble over an anti-war letter that he had written to the press, it was Graves who saved him from a court-martial—not so much for Sassoon's sake as for the reputation of the regiment. He preserved that regimental pride to the end of his life. He liked playing the role of the scarred Old Soldier, and in his last years, when his mind was failing, his memories of the war were the last to fade.

THE WAR didn't make a poet of Graves, as it did of Owen and Sassoon. Or perhaps it did, but in a different, indirect way. War sent him back to England, shell-shocked and haunted by death. He had many incapacitating phobias: he could not use a telephone or travel by train, and any unusual smell set him trembling (it might be German gas). In this shattered state he turned to the strongest-minded woman he knew and married her, and in that union he found his life's subjects: women and ghosts. And not only subjects, but a theory of poetry. Poetry, he concluded, rises out of emotional conflicts in the poet: it is a kind of psychotherapy, a laying of ghosts. And so, out of the conflicts in himself between the love of woman and the fear of death, he made new poems.

The woman Graves married was Nancy Nicholson, a fiercely independent feminist of a kind familiar enough now, but unusual then. She was not simply a Votes-for-Women suffragist, but a woman who believed in keeping her own name after marriage (and giving it to her daughters), who wore trousers and did men's work, and who expected her husband to share in household tasks. Graves was devoted to her, for reasons that he began to theorize about—making a principle out of his uxoriousness, as he had out of his phobias. Poets always deify women, he said; it's one of the costs of the calling. But rule by women was a good thing anyway. Mankind's present misery began, Graves argued, when "the mother lost her rule." Eventually all this would become *The White Goddess*, Graves's "historical grammar of poetic myth." But it was already there, in its essentials, in his marriage.

Graves lived with Nancy for ten years, impecunious and irresponsible and evidently happy, producing children and poems. And then "all that" came to an end. Laura Riding appeared, a woman more powerful than Nancy, half sibyl and half witch, and Graves surrendered to a new goddess and went off into a new life. But that is another story, for another volume.

The Assault Heroic is a promising beginning of what may well become the standard life of Graves. R. P. has had the advantage of access to a mass of family material that wasn't available to Graves's previous biographer, Martin Seymour-Smith: the diaries of Alfred Graves, Robert's father; an unfinished book about Robert by his brother; an unpublished autobiography by his mother; an unpublished autobiography by his half-brother, Perceval (they seem to have been a compulsively autobiographical family). He has used this material to develop the other characters in the story, making it far more a *family* biography than either *Goodbye* or Seymour-Smith's book is, setting Robert among the Graveses, making his life more explicable and less eccentric. But excellent though it is, *The Assault Heroic* isn't going to replace *Goodbye*. Biographies don't replace autobiographies, that's obvious; and besides, though R. P. writes perfectly well, Robert wrote brilliantly. The book lacks the personal energy, and the personal vision, of Graves's own version. Still, it provides a full and sympathetic account of Graves's early worlds, told by an intelligent and informed observer. This first volume is the family's story, and it must have been the easiest for a family member to write. The real test will come in Volume Two, when R. P. takes on Laura Riding.

SAMUEL HYNES

Samuel Hynes's memoir of the Second World War, *The Unsubstantial Air*, will be published in the fall by Frederic C. Beil.

THE LITTLE FOX

Lillian Hellman: The Image, the Woman
by William Wright

(Simon and Schuster, 507 pp., $18.95)

The most refreshing thing about this biography of Lillian Hellman—the first major biography, really—is that its author appears to have arrived at his subject largely unburdened by ideological baggage. This endows his narrative with a certain step-by-step straightforwardness, as he seeks to make sense of things that seem to make little sense. At points Wright's book is almost plodding. But in the end, it is precisely this careful approach that makes the book a convincing treatment of an extraordinary life.

In chronicling the career of the near-legendary Hellman, Wright found not just controversy, but a tissue of lies. Hellman's dishonesty, to be sure, was already a public issue when Wright undertook the project. Her libel suit against Mary McCarthy, who had described Hellman as a liar on national television, was already in litigation; it had been proven that the "Julia" character in *Pentimento*, putatively Hellman's best friend and mentor, was really Muriel Gardiner Buttinger, whom Hellman had never met; and it had also been proven that in *Scoundrel Time* Hellman misrepresented her public conduct during the McCarthy

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era, as well as the conduct of others.

But Wright finds lies and distortions in lesser known places. In fact he finds them virtually everywhere. Big lies and little lies. Political lies and literary lies. Lies told for self-advancement and self-promotion, and lies told for no apparent reason at all. He comes, gradually, to an unhappy conclusion: dishonesty wasn't just an ancillary, if unpleasant, trait of Hellman's; it was, rather, a principal characteristic of her work and her constant practice in life.

Wright seeks to account for this. And he arrives at the view that the gift for fantasy that facilitated her successful career as a dramatist overtook Hellman in real life. She came not to know when she was making things up. She became, in effect, one of her own characters. Take, for example, the claim Hellman made to a *New York Times* obituary writer when her great friend William Wyler, the Hollywood director, died. Hellman told the *Times* that Wyler had approached her during the McCarthy years with an unsolicited pledge: in view of the difficult financial circumstances into which her political dissent had cast her, Wyler would establish in her name a bank account with $35,000 in it. Every six months he would check the account and, if necessary, bring the balance back up to $35,000. A moving incident; but Wright has discovered that it never took place. Hellman's fantasies about her life were marked by recurring themes, and this was but one of many instances in which she claimed that people, out of friendship and admiration, had offered her money—usually discreetly, but once more explicitly, in a will that was never found.

A GOOD PART of Wright's study is an attempt to come to grips with Hellman's political role, and with the controversy that has attended her own rendition of that role. Wright documents her persistent misrepresentation of her own behavior before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC); and he notes that her long-standing effort to cast that behavior as lonely and heroic met with considerable success. Hellman, of course, pleaded the Fifth Amendment, as did the other uncooperative witnesses in that phase of the McCarthy era—there was nothing unique or courageous about the pose she struck. But rather than simply identify politics as another realm in which Hellman's chronic deceitfulness came to the fore, Wright looks closely at the specific answers she gave the congressional committee. And he examines her various self-celebrated deviations from the Communist Party line: from her 1940 anti-Nazi play *Watch on the Rhine*, produced (to the apparent chagrin of the *Daily Worker*) during the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact, to her late-in-life lukewarm introduction to the memoir of the Soviet dissident Lev Kopelev. In that latter, curious piece, which an ancient friendship obliged her to write, Hellman explains that she hasn't actually read the book she's introducing.

Wright finds that Hellman's dishonesty in the political dimension of her life was characterized by an internal logic. He concludes, after a cogent discussion of the special relationships some American celebrities enjoyed with the Communist Party, that Hellman functioned well within the ambit of the Party for nearly half a century, and that, at least until the early 1950s, she was likely an actual member (though a member at large, in the sense that she belonged to no particular Party club, and probably didn't pay Party dues).

This conclusion is based on more than Hellman's public pronouncements. Wright adduces Hellman's FBI file

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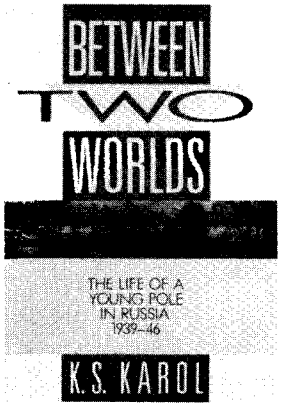

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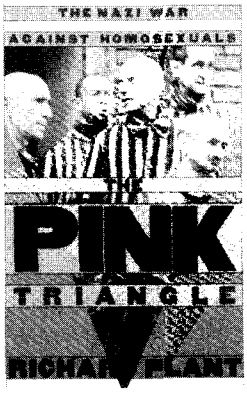

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(which he obtained under the Freedom of Information Act), testimony given about her to HUAC, and some altogether extraordinary interviews he conducted with her friends and former lovers. But most of all, he relies judiciously on common sense: "If she was not a communist . . . her record reveals a strongly unbalanced ethical sense, an extremely faulty memory and a remarkable capacity to ignore facts. She also emerges as irresponsibly determined to remain uninformed."

Because of her prominence, Hellman was far more useful to the Party as an ostensible non-member. That status afforded her a measure of credibility, as well as access to liberal circles—access that she would not have enjoyed as an open member of the Party. Her ability during the McCarthy period to retain as her attorney Joseph Rauh, a mainstream liberal and a founder of Americans for Democratic Action, is a case in point; Rauh was well known for his reluctance to defend unrepentant Communists.

From what Hellman herself wrote about the 1948 Henry Wallace campaign, from Wright's discovery of her private sympathy for Tito in his split with Moscow, and from the pattern of her answers to HUAC—she said no to the question of whether she was a Party member in 1952, 1951, and 1950 but took the Fifth Amendment with respect to 1949—it would seem that Hellman made a break of some kind with the Party at about that time. But in terms of her fundamental political disposition, this probably didn't mean a great deal. In the years after World War II, leading up to the de-Stalinization of 1956, many American Communists left the Party, having lost faith in its relevance to American life and in its political prospects here. But for this group that departure did not mean repudiation of the creed itself.

HELLMAN'S WILL, which provided for the creation of a "Dashiell Hammett Fund," left little doubt as to where she stood at the end of her life. (She died in 1984.) Deceptive about her politics to the end—yet eager, apparently, to see that some of her estate go to the support of the American left—she seems to have deployed the dead Hammett, her on-and-off companion for nearly three decades, as a front. (In life Hammett almost certainly would not have objected.) The Hammett Fund, according to Hellman's testament, was to make grant awards—"guided by the political, social and economic beliefs which, of course, were radical, of the late Dashiell Hammett who was a believer in the doctrines of Karl Marx." She might have been more specific. Hammett was a particular kind of Marxist: he was, quite openly, a Communist. Wright demonstrates, moreover, that Hellman's mythmaking extended to her relationship with Hammett. What she preferred to depict as Hammett's carousing was actually acute alcoholism, a propensity toward violence against women, and an attraction to prostitutes. More important, Wright indicates that the Hellman-Hammett relationship as a whole was something of a myth, that they had very little to do with each other during very long periods of the years they were supposed to have been together.

Among the more interesting passages in Wright's biography are those concerning Muriel Gardiner Buttinger, with whom Wright spoke about the Julia controversy. It seems that thanks to the publication of Buttinger's own memoir—and to the possibility that Mary McCarthy's lawyers in the libel suit would introduce the Julia dispute as evidence that Hellman was "a dishonest writer"—a distressed Hellman endeavored to make contact with Buttinger. Wright's skillful report of a telephone conversation between these two grand and forceful aging women—both would die within the next 18 months—evokes a dramatic and powerful moment. But the meeting between them that Hellman apparently proposed never took place.

Lillian Hellman did not want Wright's book to be written. She tried to scare him off, and instructed friends not to speak to him. Some obliged her; others did not. Hellman also accused his publishers, whom she knew, of personal betrayal. She was right to be concerned. Wright's excellent book punctures many myths. He gives his subject higher marks as a dramatist than she usually receives, but his primary focus—as his subtitle, *The Image, the Woman*, indicates—is Hellman's character, not her work. And on the question of Lillian Hellman's character, there can no longer be any doubt. This is a damning portrait.

ERIC BREINDEL

Eric Breindel is the editorial page editor of the *New York Post*.

TRB, *from page 4*

of $150,000 a year. If each of them were willing to take a $23,000 pay cut, to a mere $127,000 a year, the network would save just as much money and no one would be fired. Producers make about $100,000 and CBS is laying off 35 of 250. A shared $14,000 salary cut would do the same trick. Obviously such a sacrifice is easier to contemplate at these salary levels than at those of the more typical industrial worker. Dan Rather asserts that budget cuts are causing "a tragic transformation from Murrow to mediocrity" at CBS, making it "something between

continued on page 42

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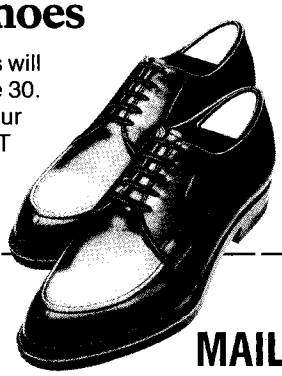

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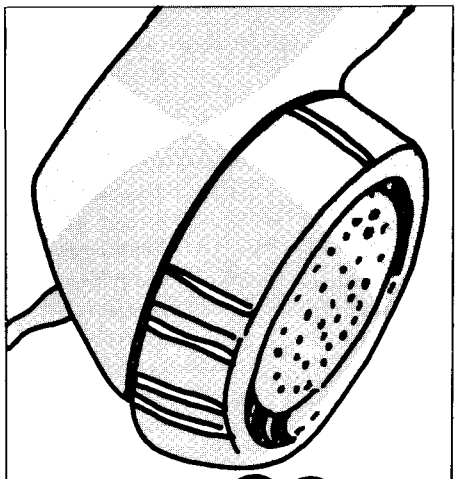

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TRB, *from page 41*

difficult and impossible" to maintain the high standards of the Edward R. Murrow tradition. But if it's layoffs that threaten those standards, they needn't suffer at all.

Rather claims that he has offered repeatedly to give up some of his own exorbitant salary ($2.5 million a year) to save some colleagues' jobs, but the network is not interested. Tisch, it's said, personally approved Diane Sawyer's recent 50 percent raise to $1.2 million. This is another pattern familiar from the rustbelt: the big shots (top executives in one case, star anchors in the other) are protected while those down the line take the blows. The trouble is that chopping these top salaries, as absurd as they are, won't really save many jobs. But if Rather and friends were to take the lead in proposing a larger scheme like the one suggested here, and CBS management were to reject it, Tisch would deserve all the obloquy being heaped on him.

But why should Dan Rather or anyone else take a pay cut just to further enrich Larry Tisch? This is the "other shoe" of profit sharing. If workers are to bear the burden of tough times, they should claim some of the benefits of good times and should have some say about how the company gets from here to there. Tisch's short reign at CBS seems to have been autocratic, secretive, and even outright deceptive. He claimed when he took over last fall that there would be no serious cuts in CBS News. Then, when the blow fell, he claimed it was all the idea of CBS News head Howard Stringer. This is hardly an invitation to cooperate.

Although CBS's profit picture is fairly bleak right now, the price of the company's stock suggests that the market believes Tisch can turn it around. Profit sharing would assure that CBS employees would enjoy the benefits of their own belt-tightening. Some kind of management sharing would give them an opportunity to apply their own knowledge of how to save money without sacrificing quality, which is probably a lot better than Tisch's and that of his outside management consultants. There's nothing like knowing that you're paying for it yourself to ruin your appetite for guacamole dip. "This guy Tisch put his money in this company, but I put my life into the company," says Andy Rooney. "I own that company." Good. Start acting like it.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

punished, we are beginning to fear that reason and persuasion no longer are effective tools for achieving peace, and that the classic Western way of using rational thought as the basis for action is becoming moribund.

GEORGE A. HEDGES
Brooklyn, New York

SOLOMON AND BABY M

To the editors:

Although it is right to look to King Solomon's decision for guidance in resolving the Baby M case, TNR draws the wrong lesson ("Calling King Solomon," February 23). Solomon did award the baby to the mother who chose to relinquish the infant rather than to split it in two, but the relevant principle was "life" versus "death." Solomon awarded the child to the mother who would preserve its life.

TNR states: "To countenance a radically divided life for the child is a disqualification for parenthood." "A radically divided life" was never the issue. The story of King Solomon, as well as that of Moses, tells us that there is only one condition under which a parent can responsibly abandon a child—when it is necessary to preserve the child's life.

Baby M's life has already been "radically divided" by the court drama. As much as William Stern would wish otherwise, Baby M will know of him and will very likely want to know him at some time. He is, after all, her father. Whatever the court decides, that fact is irrevocable. One would hope that he does not renounce his child.

PETER HAKIM
Washington, D.C.

LOST COMPANION

To the editors:

It was reported in "Washington Diarist" (March 16) that I fired the Butch Thompson Trio from "A Prairie Home Companion." I did not. The Trio's long run on the show was interrupted by the illness of its great drummer, George "Red" Maddock, who fought a good, long fight against cancer and who died in January. He was a funny and dear man, the author of the greatest Swedish-dialect blues song in American music, and I was proud to have him and the Trio on the show for as long as it was possible.

GARRISON KEILLOR
St. Paul, Minnesota

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

The 12-Minute Gap

FOR A BRIEF MOMENT last week Democrats, case-for-glee types, and Senator Bob Dole all had reasons to feel nervous. It looked as though the revelations of the past four months, climaxing in the report of the Tower Commission, might be the most dramatic stage yet prepared for a Reagan comeback. You could feel the atmosphere being primed. "Can He Recover?" asked the cover of *Time*. "Can He Recover?" was the way *Newsweek* phrased it. By the night of Reagan's televised address it was clear that many people were prepared to regard a competent delivery as an affirmative answer to both questions. By the standards of recent performances, the delivery was competent, and there was a little flurry of homage to the powers of the great communicator (R. W. Apple in the next day's *Times*: "As he has so often before, he drew the moral of the story in simple words, applicable to any household . . ."; Tom Shales, not usually a Reagan admirer, in the *Post*: "He read from the TelePrompTer with his usual fluid skill but with more deliberate, sober urgency than usual"). And then suddenly it was over. For one had only to transfer one's attention from the TV screen to the written transcript to see that the speech came apart at the first touch of analysis.

THE SUGGESTION THAT anything like an adequate response to the questions raised by the scandal might be accomplished in 12 minutes was, of course, something like an insult. But the purpose of the speech wasn't to explain what happened. It was to negotiate between the twin pitfalls advance publicity had dictated that the president must avoid: a refusal to admit that he had made a mistake, and an admission that he had made a mistake. The result was fuzz of a spectacular sort: "A few months ago I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that is true, but the facts and the evidence tell me it is not." The gloss is difficult: "I'm willing to say it wasn't true, but I reserve the right to think that it was"? Another sentence: "I asked so many questions about the hostages' welfare that I didn't ask enough about the specifics of the total Iran plan"—as though events in the real world were a function of whatever was on the president's mind (an explanation that, if it could be believed, would account for a lot). This was my favorite: "I let my personal concern for the hostages spill over into the geopolitical strategy of reaching out to Iran"—which I took to mean that the president's aides had carelessly allowed him to carry overfilled cups of personal concern around when geopolitics was in the room. Note that while the president was the agent for all these actions, he intended none of them. The speech performed its task: it protected the president. But it did so by making him irrelevant.

EVIDENCE THAT NOT JUST Ronald Reagan but the whole conservative coalition is starting to unravel has arrived in the unlikely form of a heavily illustrated paperback called *TV Sirens: A Tantalizing Look at Prime Time's Fabulous Females*, by Michael McWilliams. "Here's the book," the cover tells us, "that dishes dirt and blows kisses to more than 200 TV divas." The prose is a remarkably sustained exercise in the hyperventilated highbrow slanginess that Pauline Kael has inflicted on the world of pop culture criticism, and that only Pauline Kael should try to imitate. Sample: "When, in a black-and-white dream world, [Cybill] Shepherd crawls on all fours in a silk slip, bumping butts with [Bruce] Willis to hatch a plot, she's merging movies and TV in a way that's never been done before. She's making fire by rubbing past and future together." Warning: Do not try to unmix those metaphors. What gives the book its special interest, though, is the identity of its chief blurbist. He is William F. Buckley Jr., and he offers the following commendation: "A little black book of the ladies who light up our television screens. Beautiful, plain, prim, sexy, sweet or acid-tongued, Mr. McWilliams has removed the veils, and revealed the toughness TV success demands." (I think Buckley means to describe the luminous ladies as beautiful, sexy, etc., not Mr. McWilliams.) The determination to discover characterological virtue in sheer success, of whatever sort, is the distinctive Buckley touch. Laissez-faire conservatism points with pride to the uninhibited operation of market forces on the casting couches of Lorimar Productions.

EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE the culture produces a phenomenon that answers to some overwhelming desire you never knew existed. For me the most recent example was the fanfare that attended the release of the complete music of the Beatles on compact disk. I had not realized how serious the need was. Now it seems that the need continues to burn. According to the Arts and Leisure section of the *New York Times*, there is a distinct difference, audible on disk, between mono and stereo versions of early Beatles songs. "Without question, the mono mixes pack a greater punch. What the stereo versions . . . have going for them, though, is that they allow one to peer freely into the details of the arrangements—a fascinating pursuit if one's interest . . . is musical rather than nostalgic." One really ought to be able to purchase both mixes. "EMI," the *Times* glumly concludes, "seems to have devoted less thought to its CD program than many of the disk's prospective buyers have." The whole episode confirms my sense that the arrival of the compact disk player is the final trivialization of the experience of listening to music. Now people are engaged in serious discussions about whether or not the Beatles' music is enhanced by our being able to hear the squeaking of Ringo's drum pedal. It is a little ironic that the group that contributed so much to the overproduction of popular music, to its distancing from performance, should find itself the victim of exaggerated expectations generated by a newer technology.

MUST EVERYTHING END as a parody of itself? On William Shawn's last day at the *New Yorker*, he posted a letter he had written to his staff, in which he spoke of his feelings for the people he had worked with during his 35 years at the magazine. "Love has been the controlling emotion, and love is the essential word," he said. "We have done our work with honesty and love." He provoked a response that was a perfect lampoon of the equation between stylistic punctiliousness and genuine emotion that he had spent a lifetime cherishing. "All of us . . . admire it enormously as a piece of writing," explained staff writer William McKibben. "Most writers would not have the confidence to get away with that much repetition, but it works beautifully."

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